THE ABBOT.

Printed by James Ballantyne & Co. Edinburgh.

THE

ABBOT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "WAVERLEY."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

EDINBURGH:

LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,

LONDON;

AND FOR ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND COMPANY,

AND JOHN BALLANTYNE, EDINBURGH.

1820.

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BEING

THE SEQUEL

OF

THE MONASTERY



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CHAPTER I.

See on yon verdant lawn, the gathering crowd
Thickens amain; the buxom nymphs advance,
Usher'd by jolly clowns; distinctions cease,
Lost in the common joy, and the bold slave
Leans on his wealthy master unreproved.

Rural Games.—SOMERVILLE.

THE re-appearance of the dignified Chamberlain on the street of the village, was eagerly hailed by the revellers, as a pledge that the play, or dramatic representation, which had been postponed owing to his absence, was now full surely to commence. Any thing like an approach to this most in-

teresting of all amusements, was of recent origin in Scotland, and engaged public attention in proportion. All other sports were discontinued. The dance around the May-pole was arrested—the ring broken up and dispersed, while the dancers, each leading his partner by the hand, tripped off to the sylvan theatre. A truce was in like manner achieved betwixt a huge brown bear and certain mastiffs, who were tugging and pulling at his shaggy coat, under the mediation of the bear-ward and half a dozen butchers and yeomen, who, by dint of *staving and tailing*, as it was technically termed, separated the unfortunate animals, whose fury had for an hour past been their chief amusement. The itinerant minstrel found himself deserted by the audience he had collected, even in the most interesting passage of the romance which he recited, and just as he was sending about his boy, with bonnet in hand, to collect their oblations. He indignantly stopped short in the midst of Rosewal and Lilian, and replacing his

three-stringed fiddle or rebeck in its leathern case, followed the crowd, with no good will, to the exhibition which had superseded his own. The juggler ceased his exertions of emitting flame and smoke, and was content to respire in the manner of ordinary mortals, rather than to play gratuitously the part of a fiery dragon. In short, all other sports were suspended, so eagerly did the revellers throng towards the place of representation.

They would err greatly, who should regulate their ideas of this dramatic exhibition upon those derived from a modern theatre; for the rude shews of Thespis were far less different from those exhibited by Euripides on the stage of Athens, with all its magnificent decorations and pomp of dresses and of scenery. In the present case, there were no scenes, no stage, no machinery, no pit, box, and gallery, no box-lobby; and, what might in poor Scotland be some consolation for other negations, there was no taking of money at the door. As in the de-

vices of the magnanimous Bottom, the actors had a green-sward plot for a stage, and a hawthorn bush for a green-room and tyring-house; the spectators being accommodated with seats on the artificial bank which had been raised around three-fourths of the play-ground, the remainder being left open for the entrance and exit of the performers. Here sate the uncritical audience, the Chamberlain in the centre, as the person highest in office, all alive to enjoyment and admiration, and all therefore dead to criticism.

The characters which appeared and disappeared before the amused and interested audience, were those which fill the earlier stage in all nations—old men, cheated by their wives and daughters, pillaged by their sons, and imposed on by their domestics, a braggadocio captain, a knavish pardoner or quæstionary, a country bumpkin, and a wanton city-dame. Amid all these, and more acceptable than almost the whole put together, was the all-licensed fool, the Gracioso of the Spanish drama, who, with his

cap fashioned into the resemblance of a coxcomb, and his bauble, a truncheon terminated by a carved figure, wearing a fool's-cap, in his hand, went, came, and returned, mingling in every scene of the piece, and interrupting the business, without having any share himself in the action, and ever and anon transferring his gibes from the actors on the stage to the audience who sate around, prompt to applaud the whole.

The wit of the piece, which was not of the most polished kind, was chiefly directed against the superstitious practices of the Catholic religion; and the stage artillery had on this occasion been levelled by no less a person than Doctor Lundin, who had not only commanded the manager of the entertainment to select one of the numerous satires which had been written against the Papists, (several of which were cast in a dramatic form,) but had even, like the Prince of Denmark, caused them to insert, or according to his own phrase to infuse, here and there, a few pleasantries of

his own penning, on the same inexhaustible subject, hoping thereby to mollify the rigour of the Lady of Lochleven towards pastimes of this description. He failed not to jog Roland's elbow, who was sitting in state behind him, and recommend to his particular attention those favourite passages. As for the page, to whom the very idea of such an exhibition, simple as it was, was entirely new, he beheld it with the undiminished and ecstatic delight with which men of all ranks look for the first time on dramatic representation, and laughed, shouted, and clapped his hands as the performance proceeded. An incident at length took place which effectually broke off his interest in the business of the scene.

One of the principal personages in the comic part of the drama was, as we have already said, a quæstionary or pardoner, one of those itinerants who hawked about from place to place reliques, real or pretended, with which he excited the devotion at once, and the charity of the populace, and general-

ly deceived both the one and the other. The hypocrisy, impudence, and profligacy of these clerical wanderers, had made them the subject of satire from the time of Chaucer down to that of Heywood. Their present representative failed not to follow the same line of humour, exhibiting pig's bones for reliques, and boasting the virtues of small tin crosses, which had been shaken in the holy porringer at Loretto, and of cockle-shells, which had been brought from the shrine of Saint James of Compostella, all which he disposed of to the devout Catholics at nearly as high a price as antiquaries are now willing to pay for baubles of similar intrinsic value. At length the pardoner pulled from his scrip a small phial of clear water, of which he vaunted the quality in the following verses :—

Listneth, gode people, everiche one,
For in the londe of Babylone,
Far eastward I wot it lyeth,
And is the first londe the sonne espieth,
Ther, as he cometh fro out the sé ;
In this ilk londe, as thinketh me,

Right as holie legendes tell,
Snottreth from a roke a well,
And falleth into ane bath of ston,
Wher chast Susanne in times long gon,
Was wont to wash her bodie and lim—
Mickle vertue hath that streme,
As ye shall se er that ye pas,
Ensample by this little glas—
Through nightés cold and dayés hote,
Hiderward I have it brought;
Hath a wife made slip or slide,
Or a maiden stepp'd aside;
Putteth this water under her nese,
Wold she nold she, she shall snese.

The jest, as the reader skilful in the antique language of the drama must at once perceive, turned on the same pivot as in the old minstrel tales of the Drinking Horn of King Arthur, and the Mantle made Amiss. But the audience were neither learned nor critical enough to challenge its want of originality. The potent relique was, after such grimace and buffoonery as befitted the subject, presented successively to each of the female personages of the drama, not one of whom sustained the supposed test of discretion; but, to the infinite delight of

the audience, sneezed much louder and longer than perhaps they themselves had counted on. The jest seemed at last worn thread-bare, and the pardoner was passing on to some new pleasantry, when the jester or clown of the drama, possessing himself secretly of the phial which contained the wondrous liquor, applied it suddenly to the nose of a young woman, who, with her black silk muffler or screen drawn over her face, was sitting in the foremost rank of the spectators, intent apparently upon the business of the stage. The contents of the phial, well calculated to sustain the credit of the pardoner's legend, set the damsel a sneezing violently, an admission of frailty which was received with shouts of rapture by the audience. These were soon, however, renewed at the expence of the jester himself, when the insulted maiden extricated, ere the paroxysm was well over, one hand from the folds of her mantle, and bestowed on the wag a buffet, which made him reel fully his own length from the pardoner,

and then acknowledge the favour by instant prostration.

No one pities a jester overcome in his vocation, and the clown met with little sympathy, when, rising from the ground, and whimpering forth his complaints of harsh treatment, he invoked the assistance and sympathy of the audience. But the Chamberlain feeling his own dignity insulted, ordered two of his halberdiers to bring the culprit before him. When these official persons first approached the virago, she threw herself into an attitude of firm defiance, as if determined to resist their authority; and from the sample of strength and spirit which she had already displayed, they shewed no alacrity at executing their commission. But on half a minute's reflection, the damsel changed totally her attitude and manner, folded her cloak around her arms in modest and maiden-like fashion, and walked of her own accord to the presence of the great man, followed and guarded by the two manful satellites. As she moved across the va-

cant space, and more especially as she stood at the footstool of the doctor's judgment-seat, the maiden discovered that lightness and elasticity of step, and natural grace of manner, which connoisseurs in female beauty know to be seldom divided from it. Moreover, her neat russet-coloured jacket, and short petticoat of the same colour, displayed a handsome form and a pretty leg. Her features were concealed by the screen; but the Doctor, whose gravity did not prevent his pretensions to be a connoisseur of the school we have hinted at, saw enough to judge favourably of the piece by the sample.

He began, however, with considerable austerity of manner—"And, how now, saucy quean," said the medical man of office, "what have you to say why I should not order you to be ducked in the loch, for lifting your hand to the man in my presence?"

"Marry," replied the culprit, "because

I judge that your honour will not think the cold bath necessary for my complaints."

"A pestilent jade," said the Doctor, whispering to Roland Græme; "and I'll warrant her a good one—her voice is as sweet as syrup.—But, my pretty maiden," said he, "you shew us wonderfully little of that countenance of yours—be pleased to throw aside your muffler."

"I trust your honour will excuse me till we are more private," answered the maiden; "for I have acquaintance, and I should like ill to be known in the country as the poor girl whom that scurvy knave put his jest upon."

"Fear nothing for thy good name, my sweet little modicum of candied manna," replied the Doctor, "for I protest to you, as I am Chamberlain of Lochleven, Kinross, and so forth, that the chaste Susanna herself could not have snuffed that elixir without sternutation, being in truth a curious distillation of rectified *acetum*, or vinegar of the sun, prepared by mine own hands

—Wherefore, as thou sayest thou wilt come to me in private, and express thy contrition for the offence whereof thou hast been guilty, I command that all for the present go forward as if no such interruption of the prescribed course had taken place."

The damsel curtsied and tripped back to her place. The play proceeded, but it no longer attracted the attention of Roland Græme.

The voice, the figure, and what the veil permitted to be seen of the neck and tresses of the village damsel, bore so strong a resemblance to those of Catherine Seyton, that he felt like one bewildered in the mazes of a changeful and stupifying dream. The memorable scene of the hostelry rushed on his recollection, with all its doubtful and marvellous circumstances. Were the tales of enchantment which he had read in romances realized in this extraordinary girl? Could she transport herself from the walled and guarded Castle of Lochleven, moated with its broad lake, (towards which he cast

back a look as if to ascertain it was still in existence,) and watched with such scrupulous care as the safety of a nation demanded—Could she surmount all these obstacles, and make such careless and dangerous use of her liberty, as to engage herself publicly in a quarrel in a village fair? Roland was unable to determine whether the exertions which it must have cost her to gain her freedom, or the use to which she had put it, rendered her the most unaccountable creature.

Lost in these meditations, he kept his gaze fixed on the subject of them: and in every casual motion, discovered, or thought he discovered, something which reminded him still more strongly of Catherine Seyton. It occurred to him more than once, indeed, that he might be deceiving himself by exaggerating some casual likeness into absolute identity. But then the meeting at the hostelry of Saint Michael's returned to his mind, and it seemed in the highest degree improbable, that, under such various cir-

cumstances, mere imagination should twice have found opportunity to play him the self-same trick. This time, however, he determined to have his doubts resolved, and for this purpose he sate during the rest of the play like a grey-hound in the slip, ready to spring upon the hare the instant that she was started. The damsel, whom he watched attentively lest she should escape in the crowd when the spectacle was closed, sate as if perfectly unconscious that she was observed. But the worthy Doctor marked the direction of his eyes, and magnanimously suppressed his own inclination to become the Theseus to this Hippolita, in deference to the rights of hospitality which enjoined him to forbear interference with the pleasurable pursuits of his young friend. He passed one or two formal gibes upon the fixed attention which the page paid to the unknown, and upon his own jealousy; adding, however, that if both were to be presented to the patient at once, he had little doubt she would think the younger man the sounder prescription.

" I fear me," he added, " we shall have no news of the knave Auchtermuchty for some time, since the vermin whom I sent after him seem to have proved corbie-messengers. So you have an hour or two on your hands, Master Page; and as the minstrels are beginning to strike up, now that the play is ended, why, an you incline for a dance, yonder is the green, and there sits your partner—I trust you will hold me perfect in my diagnostics, since I see with half an eye what disease you are sick of, and have administered a pleasing remedy.

Discernit sapiens res (as Chambers hath it) *quas confundit asellus.*"

The page hardly heard the end of the learned adage, or the charge which the Chamberlain gave him to be within reach, in case of the wains arriving suddenly, and sooner than expected—so eager he was at once to shake himself free of his learned associate, and to satisfy his curiosity regarding the unknown damsel. Yet, in the haste

with which he made towards her, he found time to reflect, that in order to secure an opportunity of conversing with her in private, he must not alarm her at first accosting her. He therefore composed his manner and gait, and advancing with becoming self-confidence before three or four country-fellows who were intent on the same design, but knew not so well how to put their request into shape, he acquainted her that he, as the deputy of the venerable Chamberlain, requested the honour of her hand as a partner.

"The venerable Chamberlain," said the damsel frankly, reaching the page her hand, "does very well to exercise this part of his privilege by deputy; and I suppose the laws of the revels leave me no choice but to accept of his faithful delegate."

"Providing, fair damsel," said the page, "his choice of a delegate is not altogether distasteful to you."

"Of that, fair sir," replied the maiden,

"I will tell you more when we have danced the first measure."

We have mentioned that Catherine Seyton had admirable skill in gestic lore, and that she was sometimes called on to dance for the amusement of her royal mistress. Roland Græme had often been a spectator of her skill, and sometimes, at the Queen's command, Catherine's partner on such occasions. He was, therefore, perfectly acquainted with Catherine's mode of dancing; and observed that his present partner, in grace, in agility, in quickness of ear, and precision of execution, exactly resembled her, save that the Scottish jigg, which he now danced with her, required a more violent and rapid motion, and more rustic agility, than the stately pavens, lavoltas, and courantoes, which he had seen her execute in the chamber of Queen Mary. The active duties of the dance left him little time for reflection, and none for conversation; but when their *pas des deux* was finished, amidst the acclama-

tions of the villagers, who had seldom witnessed such an exhibition, he took an opportunity, when they yielded up the green to another couple, to use the privilege of a partner, and enter into conversation with the mysterious maiden whom he still held by the hand. "Fair partner, may I not crave the name of her who has graced me thus far?"

"You may," said the maiden; "but it is a question whether I shall answer you."

"And why?" asked Roland.

"Because nobody gives anything for nothing—and you can tell me nothing in return which I care to hear."

"Could I not tell you my name and lineage, in exchange for yours?" returned Roland.

"No!" answered the maiden, "for you know little of either."

"How?" said the page, somewhat angrily.

"Wrath you not for the matter," said the damsel; "I will shew you in an instant

that I know more of you than you do of yourself."

"Indeed!" answered Græme; "for whom then do you take me?"

"For the wild falcon," answered she, "whom a dog brought in his mouth to a certain castle, when he was but an unfledged eyass—for the hawk whom men dare not let fly, lest he should check at game, and pounce on carrion—whom folks must keep hooded till he has the proper light of his eyes, and can discover good from evil."

"Well—be it so," replied Roland Græme; "I guess at a part of your parable, fair mistress mine—and perhaps I know as much of you as you do of me, and can well dispense with the information which you are so niggard in giving."

"Prove that," said the maiden, "and I will give you credit for more penetration than I judged you to be gifted withal."

"It shall be proved instantly," said Roland Græme. "The first letter of your name is S, and the last N."

"Admirable!" said his partner; "guess on."

"It pleases you to-day," continued Roland, "to wear the snood and kirtle, and perhaps you may be seen to-morrow in hat and feather, hose and doublet.

"In the clout! in the clout! you have hit the very white," said the damsel, suppressing a great inclination to laugh.

"You can switch men's eyes out of their heads as well as the heart out of their bosoms."

These last words were uttered in a low and tender tone, which, to Roland's great mortification, and somewhat to his displeasure, was so far from allaying, that it greatly increased his partner's disposition to laughter. She could scarce compose herself while she replied, "If you had thought my hand so formidable," extricating it from his grasp, "you would not have grasped it so hardly; but I perceive you know me so fully, that there is no occasion to shew you my face."

"Fair Catherine," said the page, "he were unworthy ever to have seen you, far less to have dwelt so long in the same service, and under the same roof with you, who could mistake your air, your gesture, your step in walking or in dancing, the turn of your neck, the symmetry of your form—none could be so dull as not to recognize you by so many proofs; but for me, I could swear even to that tress of hair that escapes from under your muffler."

"And to the face of course which that muffler covers," said the maiden, removing her veil, and in an instant endeavouring to replace it. She shewed the features of Catherine; but an unusual degree of petulant impatience inflamed them, when, from some awkwardness in her management of the muffler, she was unable again to adjust it with that dexterity which was a principal accomplishment of the coquettes of the time.

"The fiend rive the rag to tatters," said the damsel, as the veil fluttered about her

shoulders, with an accent so earnest and decided, that it made the page start. He looked again at the damsel's face, but the information which his eyes received, was to the same purport as before. He assisted her to adjust her muffler, and both were for for an instant silent. The damsel spoke first, for Roland Græme was overwhelmed with surprise at the contrarieties which Catherine Seyton seemed to include in her person and character.

"You are surprised," said the damsel to him, "at what you see and hear—But the times which make females men, are least of all fitted for men to become women; yet you yourself are in danger of such a change."

"I in danger of becoming effeminate!" said the page.

"Yes you, for all the boldness of your reply," said the damsel. "When you should hold fast your religion, because it is assailed on all sides by rebels, traitors, and heretics, you let it glide out of your breast like wa-

ter grasped in the hand. If you are driven from the faith of your fathers from fear of a traitor, is not that womanish?—If you are cajoled by the cunning arguments of a trumpeter of heresy, or the praises of a puritanic old woman, is not that womanish? —If you are bribed by the hope of spoil and preferment, is not that womanish?—And when you wonder at my venting a threat or an execration, should you not wonder at yourself, who, pretending to a gentle name and aspiring to knighthood, can be at the same time cowardly, silly, and self-interested?"

"I would that a man would bring such a charge," said the page; "he should see, ere his life was a minute older, whether he had cause to term me coward or no."

"Beware of such big words," answered the maiden; "you said but anon that I sometimes wear hose and doublet."

"But remain still Catherine Seyton, wear what you list," said the page, endea-

vouring again to possess himself of her hand.

"You indeed are pleased to call me so," replied the maiden, evading his intention, "but I have many another name besides."

"And will you not reply to that," said the page, "by which you are distinguished beyond every other maiden in Scotland?"

The damsel, unallured by his praises, still kept aloof, and sung with gaiety a verse from an old ballad,

"O some do call me Jack, sweet love,
And some do call me Gill,
But when I ride to Holyrood,
My name is Wilful Will."

"Wilful Will!' exclaimed the page, impatiently; "say rather Will o' the Wisp—Jack with the lantern, for never was such a deceitful or wandering meteor."

"If I be such," replied the maiden, "I

ask no fools to follow me—If they do so, it is at their own pleasure, and must be on their own proper peril."

"Nay, but, dearest Catherine,' said Roland Græme, "be for one instant serious."

"If you will call me your dearest Catherine, when I have given you so many names to chuse upon," replied the damsel, "I would ask you how, supposing me for two or three hours of my life escaped from yonder tower, you have the cruelty to ask me to be serious during the only merry moments I have seen perhaps for months?"

"Ay, but, fair Catherine, there are moments of deep and true feeling, which are worth ten thousand years of the liveliest mirth; and such was that of yesterday, when you so nearly"——

"So nearly what?" demanded the damsel, hastily.

"When you approached your lips so

near to the sign you had traced on my forehead."

"Mother of Heaven!" said she in a yet fiercer tone, and with a more masculine manner than she had yet exhibited; "Catherine Seyton approach her lips to a man's brow, and thou that man!—vassal, thou liest!"

The page stood astonished; but, conceiving he had alarmed the damsel's delicacy by alluding to the enthusiasm of a moment, and the manner in which she had expressed it, he endeavoured to faulter forth an apology. His excuses, though he was unable to give them any regular shape, were accepted by his companion, who had indeed suppressed her indignation after its first explosion—"Speak no more on't," she said; "and now let us part, our conversation may attract more notice than is convenient for either of us."

"Nay, but allow me at least to follow you to some sequestered place."

"You dare not," replied the maiden.

"How," said the youth, "dare not? where is it you dare go, where I dare not follow?"

"You fear a Will o' the Wisp," said the damsel; "how would you face a fiery dragon, with an enchantress mounted on its back?"

"Like Sir Eger, Sir Grime, or Sir Greysteil," said the page; "but be there such toys to be seen here?"

"I go to Mother Nicneven's," answered the maid; "and she is witch enough to rein the horned devil, with a red silk thread for a bridle, and a rowan-tree switch for a whip."

"I will follow you," said the page.

"Let it be at some distance," said the maiden.

And wrapping her mantle around her with more success than on her former attempt, she mingled with the throng, and walked towards the village, heedfully fol-

lowed by Roland Græme at some distance, and under every precaution which he could use to prevent his purpose from being observed.

CHAPTER II.

Yes, it is he whose eyes look'd on thy childhood,
And watch'd with trembling hope thy dawn of youth,
That now, with these same eye-balls dimm'd with age,
And dimmer yet with tears, sees thy dishonour.

Old Play.

At the entrance of the principal, or indeed so to speak, the only street in Kinross, the damsel, whose steps were pursued by Roland Græme, cast a glance behind her, as if to be certain he had not lost trace of her, and then plunged down a very narrow lane which run betwixt two rows of poor and ruinous cottages. She paused for a second at the door of one of those miserable tenements, again cast her eye up the lane towards Roland, then lifted the latch, opened the door, and disappeared from his view.

With whatever haste the page followed

her example, the difficulty which he found in discovering the trick of the latch, which did not work quite in the usual manner, and in pushing open the door, which did not yield to his first effort, delayed for a minute or two his entrance into the cottage. A dark and smoky passage passed as usual betwixt the exterior wall of the house, and the *hallan* or clay-wall which served as a partition betwixt and the interior. At the end of this passage and through the partition, was a door leading into the *ben*, or inner chamber of the cottage, and when Roland Græme's hand was upon the latch of this door, a female voice pronounced, "*Benedictus qui veniat in nomine Domini, damnandus qui in nomine inimici.*" On entering the apartment, he perceived the figure which the chamberlain had pointed out to him as Mother Nicneven, seated beside the lowly hearth. But there was no other person in the room. Roland Græme gazed around in surprise at the disappearance of Catherine Seyton, without paying much re-

gard to the supposed sorceress, until she attracted and rivetted his regard by the tone in which she asked him—" What seekest thou here?"

" I seek," said the page, with much embarrassment; " I seek"——

But his answer was cut short, when the old woman, drawing her huge grey eyebrows sternly together, with a frown which knitted her brow into a thousand wrinkles, arose, and stretching herself up to her full natural size, tore the kerchief from her head, and seizing Roland by the arm, made two strides across the floor of the apartment to a small window through which the light fell full on her face, and shewed the astonished youth the countenance of Magdalen Græme.—" Yes, Roland," she said, " thine eyes deceive thee not, they shew thee truly the features of her whom thou hast thyself deceived, whose wine thou hast turned into gall, her bread of joyfulness into bitter poison, her hope into the blackest despair—it is she who now demands of thee what seekest

thou here?—She whose heaviest sin towards Heaven hath been that she loved thee even better than the weal of the whole church, and could not without reluctance surrender thee even in the cause of God—she now asks you what seekest thou here?"

While she spoke, she kept her broad black eye rivetted on the youth's face, with the expression with which the eagle regards his prey ere he tears it to pieces. Roland felt himself at the moment incapable either of reply or evasion. This extraordinary enthusiast had preserved over him in some measure the ascendancy which she had acquired during his childhood; and besides he knew the violence of her passions and her impatience of contradiction, and was sensible that almost any reply which he could make, was like to throw her into an ecstacy of rage. He was therefore silent, and Magdalen Græme proceeded with encreasing enthusiasm in her apostrophe—

"Once more, what seek'st thou, false boy?—seek'st thou the honour thou hast renoun-

ced, the faith thou hast abandoned, the hopes thou hast destroyed ?—Or didst thou seek me, the sole protectress of thy youth, the only parent whom thou hast known, that thou mayst trample on my grey hairs, even as thou hast already trampled on the best wishes of my heart?"

"Pardon me, mother," said Roland Græme, "but, in truth and reason, I deserve not your blame—I have been treated amongst you—even by yourself, my reverend parent, as well as by others.—as one who lacked the common attributes of free-will and human reason, or was at least deemed unfit to exercise them. A land of enchantment have I been led into, and spells have been cast around me—every one has met me in disguise—every one has spoke to me in parables—I have been like one who walks in a weary and bewildering dream, and now you blame me that I have not the sense, and judgment, and steadiness of a waking, and a disenchanted, and a reasonable man, who knows what he is doing, and wherefore he

does it. If one must walk with masks and spectres, who waft themselves from place to place as it were in vision rather than reality, it might shake the soundest faith and turn the wisest head. I sought, since I must needs avow my folly, the same Catherine Seyton with whom you made me first acquainted, and whom I most strangely find in this village of Kinross, gayest among the revellers, when I had but just left her in the well-guarded castle of Lochleven, the sad attendant of an imprisoned Queen—I sought her, and in her place I find you, my mother, more strangely disguised than even she is."

"And what hadst thou to do with Catherine Seyton?" said the matron, sternly; "is this a time or a world to follow maidens, or to dance around a maypole? When the trumpet summons every true-hearted Scotsman around the standard of the true sovereign, shalt thou be found loitering in a lady's bower?"

"No, by Heaven, nor imprisoned in the rugged walls of an island castle!" answered

Roland Græme; "I would the blast were to sound even now, for I fear that nothing less loud will dispel the chimerical visions by which I am surrounded."

"Doubt not that it will be winded," said the matron, "and that so fearfully loud, that Scotland will never hear the like until the last and loudest blast of all shall announce to mountain and to valley that time is no more. Meanwhile, be thou but brave and constant—Serve God and honour thy sovereign—Abide by thy religion.—I cannot—I will not—I dare not ask thee the truth of the terrible surmises I have heard touching thy falling away—perfect not that accursed sacrifice—and yet, even at this late hour, thou mayst be what I have hoped for the son of my dearest hope—what say I? the son of *my* hope—thou shalt be the hope of Scotland, her boast and her honour!—Even thy wildest and most foolish wishes may perchance be fulfilled—I shame to mingle meaner motives with the noble guerdon I hold out to thee—It shames me, being such as I am.

to mention the idle passions of youth, save with contempt and the purpose of censure. But we must bribe children to wholesome medicine by the offer of cates, and youth to honourable achievement with the promise of pleasure. Mark me, therefore, Roland. The love of Catherine Seyton will follow him only who shall achieve the freedom of her mistress; and believe, it may be one day in thine own power to be that happy lover. Cast, therefore, away doubt and fear, and prepare to do what religion calls for, what thy country demands of thee, what thy duty as a subject and as a servant alike require at your hand; and be assured even the idlest wishes of thy heart will be most readily attained by following the call of thy duty."

As she ceased speaking, a double knock was heard against the inner door. The matron hastily adjusting her muffler, and resuming her chair by the hearth, demanded who was there.

"*Salve in nomine sancto*," was answered from without.

"*Salvete et vos*," answered Magdalen Græme.

And a man entered in the ordinary dress of a nobleman's retainer, wearing at his girdle a sword and buckler—"I sought you," said he, "my mother, and him whom I see with you." Then addressing himself to Roland Græme, he said to him, "Hast thou not a packet from George Douglas?"

"I have," said the page, suddenly recollecting that which had been committed to his charge in the morning, "but I may not deliver it to any one without some token that they have right to ask it."

"You say well," replied the serving-man, and whispered into his ear, "The packet which I ask is the report to his father—will this token suffice?"

"It will," replied the page, and taking the packet from his bosom, gave it to the man.

"I will return presently," said the serving-man, and left the cottage.

Roland had now sufficiently recovered his surprise to accost his relative in turn, and request to know the reason why he found her in so precarious a disguise, and a place so dangerous—"You cannot be ignorant," he said, "of the hatred that the Lady of Lochleven bears to those of your—that is of our religion—your present disguise lays you open to suspicions of a different kind, but inferring no less hazard; and whether as a Catholic, or as a sorceress, or as a friend to the unfortunate Queen, you are in equal danger, if apprehended within the bounds of the Douglas; and in the Chamberlain, who administers their authority, you have, for his own reasons, an enemy, and a bitter one."

"I know it," said the matron, her eyes kindling with triumph; "I know that, vain of his school-craft, and carnal wisdom, Luke Lundin views with jealousy and hatred the blessings which the saints have conferred on my prayers, and on the holy reliques, before

the touch, nay, before the bare presence of which, disease and death have so often been known to retreat—I know he would rend and tear me; but there is a chain and a muzzle on the ban-dog that shall restrain his fury, and the Master's servant shall not be offended by him until the Master's work is wrought. When that hour comes, let the shadows of the evening descend on me in thunder and in tempest; the time shall be welcome that relieves my eyes from seeing guilt, and my ears from listening to blasphemy. Do thou but be constant—play thy part as I have played and will play mine, and my release shall be like that of a blessed martyr which angels hail with psalm and song, while earth pursues him with hiss and with execration."

As she concluded, the serving-man again entered the cottage, and said, "All is well! the time holds for to-morrow night."

"What time? what holds?" exclaimed Roland Græme; "I trust I have given the Douglas's packet to no wrong"——

"Content yourself, young man," answered the serving-man; "thou hast my word and token."

"I know not if the token be right," said the page; "and I care not much for the word of a stranger."

"What," said the matron, "although thou mayst have given a packet delivered to thy charge by one of the Queen's rebels into the hand of a loyal subject—there were no great mistake in that, thou hot-brained boy."

"By Saint Andrew, there were foul mistake though," answered the page; "it is the very spirit of my duty, in this first stage of chivalry, to be faithful to my trust; and had the devil given me a message to discharge, I would not (so I had plighted my faith to the contrary) betray his counsel to an angel of light."

"Now, by the love I once bore thee," said the matron, "I could slay thee with mine own hand, when I hear thee talk of a dearer

faith being due to rebels and heretics, than thou owest to thy church and thy prince!"

"Be patient, my good sister," said the serving-man, "I will give him such reasons as shall counterbalance the scruples which beset him—the spirit is honourable, though now it may be mistimed and misplaced—Follow me, young man."

"Ere I go to call this stranger to a reckoning," said the page to the matron, "is there nothing I can do for your comfort and safety?"

"Nothing," she replied, "nothing, save what will lead more to thy own honour—the saints who have protected me thus far, will lend me succour as I need it. Tread the path of glory that is before thee, and only think of me as the creature on earth who will be most delighted to hear of thy fame.—Follow the stranger—he hath tidings for you that you little expect."

The stranger remained on the threshold as if waiting for Roland, and whenever he

saw him put himself in motion, he moved on before him at a quick pace. Diving still deeper down the lane, Roland perceived that it was now bordered by buildings upon the one side only, and that the other was fenced by a high old wall, over which some trees extended their branches. Descending a good way farther, they came to a small door in the wall. Roland's guide paused, looked around for an instant to see if any one were within sight, then taking a key from his pocket, opened the door and entered, making a sign to Roland Græme to follow him. The guided did so, and the stranger locked the door carefully on the inside. During this operation the page had a moment to look around, and perceived that he was in a small orchard very trimly kept.

The stranger led him through an alley or two, shaded by trees loaded with summer-fruit, into a pleached arbour, where, taking the turf-seat which was on the one side, he motioned to Roland to occupy that which

was opposite to him, and after a momentary silence, opened the conversation as follows: "You have asked a better warrant than the word of a mere stranger, to satisfy you that I have the authority of George of Douglas for possessing myself of the packet entrusted to your charge?"

"It is precisely the point on which I demand reckoning of you," said Roland. "I fear I have acted hastily; if so, I must redeem my error as I best may."

"You hold me then as a perfect stranger?" said the man. "Look at my face more attentively, and see if the features do not resemble those of a man much known to you formerly."

Roland gazed attentively, but the ideas recalled to his mind were so inconsistent with the mean and servile dress of the person before him, that he did not venture to express the opinion which he was irresistibly induced to form.

"Yes! my son," said the stranger, observing his embarrassment, "you do indeed

see before you the unfortunate Father Ambrose, who once accounted his ministry crowned in your preservation from the snares of heresy, but who is now condemned to lament thee as a cast-away!"

Roland Græme's kindness of heart was at least equal to his vivacity of temper—he could not bear to see his ancient and honoured master and spiritual guide in a situation which inferred a change of fortune so melancholy, but, throwing himself at his feet, grasped his knees and wept aloud.

"What mean these tears, my son?" said the Abbot; "if they are shed for your own sins and follies, surely they are gracious showers, and may avail thee much—but weep not, if they fall on my account. You indeed see the Superior of the Community of Saint Mary's, in the dress of a poor sworder, who gives his master the use of his blade and buckler, and, if needful, of his life, for a coarse livery coat, and four marks by the year. But such a garb suits the time, and,

in the period of the church militant, as well becomes her prelates, as staff, mitre, and crosier, in the days of the church's triumph."

"By what fate," said the page,—"and yet why," added he, checking himself, "need I ask? Catherine Seyton in some sort prepared me for this. But that the change should be so absolute—the destruction so complete!"——

"Yes, my son," said the Abbot Ambrosius, "thine own eyes beheld, in my unworthy elevation to the Abbot's stall, the last especial act of holy solemnity which shall be seen in the church of Saint Mary's, until it shall please Heaven to turn back the captivity of the church. For the present, the shepherd is smitten—ay, well nigh to the earth—the flock are scattered, and the shrines of saints and martyrs, and pious benefactors to the church, are given to the owls of night, and the satyrs of the desert."

"And your brother, the Knight of Avenel—could he do nothing for your protection?"

"He himself hath fallen under the suspicion of the ruling powers," said the Abbot, "who are as unjust to their friends as they are cruel to their enemies. I could not grieve at it, did I hope it might estrange him from his course; but I know the soul of Halbert, and I rather fear it will drive him to prove his fidelity to their unhappy cause, by some deed which may be yet more destructive to the church, and more offensive to heaven. Enough of this, and now to the business of our meeting—I trust you will hold it sufficient if I pass my word to you that the packet of which you were lately the bearer, was designed for my hands by George of Douglas?"

"Then," said the page, "is George of Douglas"——

"A true friend to his Queen, Roland; and will soon, I trust, have his eyes opened to the errors of his (miscalled) church."

"But what is he to his father, and what to the Lady of Lochleven, who has been

as a mother to him?" said the page impatiently.

"The best friend to both, in time ard through eternity," said the Abbot, "if he shall prove the happy instrument for redeeming the evil they have wrought, and are still working."

"Still," said the page, "I like not that good service which begins in breach of trust."

"I blame not thy scruples, my son," said the Abbot; "but the time which has wrenched asunder the allegiance of Christians to the church, and of subjects to their king, has dissolved all the lesser bonds of society; and, in such days, mere human ties must no more restrain our progress, than the brambles and briars, which catch hold of his garments, should delay the path of a pilgrim who travels to pay his vows."

"But, my father," said the youth, and then stopped short in a hesitating manner.

"Speak on my son," said the Abbot; "speak without fear."

"Let me not offend you then," said Roland, "when I say that it is even this which our adversaries charge against us; that shaping the means according to the end, we are willing to commit great moral evil in order that we may work out eventual good."

"The heretics have played their usual arts on you, my son," said the Abbot; "they would willingly deprive us of the power of acting wisely and secretly, though their possession of superior force forbids our contending with them on the terms of equality. They have reduced us to a state of exhausted weakness, and now would fain proscribe the means by which weakness, through all the range of nature, supplies the lack of strength, and defends itself against its potent enemies. As well might the hound say to the hare, use not these wily turns to escape me, but contend with me in pitched battle, as the armed and powerful heretic demands of the down-trodden and oppressed Catholic to lay aside the wisdom of the serpent, by which alone they may again hope

to raise up the Jerusalem over which they weep, and which it is their duty to rebuild —But more of this hereafter. And now, my son, I command thee on thy faith to tell me truly and particularly what has chanced to thee since we parted, and what is the present state of thy conscience. Thy relation, our sister Magdalen, is a woman of excellent gifts, blessed with a zeal which neither doubt nor danger can quench; but yet it is not a zeal altogether according to knowledge; wherefore, my son, I would willingly be myself thy interrogator and thy counsellor, in these days of darkness and stratagem."

With the respect which he owed to his first instructor, Roland Græme went rapidly through the events which the reader is acquainted with; and while he disguised not from the prelate the impression which had been made on his mind by the arguments of the preacher Henderson, he accidentally, and almost involuntarily, gave his Father Confessor to understand the in-

fluence which Catherine Seyton had acquired over his mind.

"It is with joy I discover, my dearest son," replied the Abbot, "that I have arrived in time to arrest thee on the verge of the precipice to which thou wert approaching. These doubts of which you complain, are the weeds which naturally grow up in a strong soil, and require the careful hand of the husbandman to eradicate them. Thou must study a little volume, which I will impart to thee in fitting time, in which, by Our Lady's grace, I have placed in somewhat a clearer light than heretofore, the points debated betwixt us and these heretics, who sow among the wheat the same tares which were formerly privily mingled with the good seed by the Albigenses and the Lollards. But it is not by reason alone that you must hope to conquer these insinuations of the enemy: It is sometimes by timely resistance, but oftener by timely flight. You must shut your ears against the arguments of the heresiarch, when cir-

cumstances permit you not to withdraw the foot from his company. Anchor your thoughts upon the service of Our Lady, while he is expending in vain his heretical sophistry. Are you unable to maintain your attention on heavenly objects, think rather on thine own earthly pleasures, than tempt Providence and the Saints, by giving an attentive ear to the erring doctrine—think of thy hawk, thy hound, thine angling-rod, thy sword and buckler—think even of Catherine Seyton, rather than give thy soul to the lessons of the tempter. Alas! my son, believe not that, worn out with woes, and bent more by affliction than by years, I have forgotten the effect of beauty over the heart of youth. Even in the watches of the night, broken by thoughts of an imprisoned Queen, a distracted kingdom, a church laid waste and ruinous, come other thoughts than these suggest, and feelings which belonged to an earlier and happier course of life. Be it so—we must bear our load as we may; and not in vain are these passions

implanted in our breast, since, as now in thy case, they may come in aid of resolutions founded upon higher grounds. Yet beware, my son—this Catherine Seyton is the daughter of one of Scotland's proudest, as well as most worthy barons; and thy state may not suffer thee, as yet, to aspire so high. But thus it is—Heaven works its purposes through human folly; and Douglas's ambitious affection, as well as thine, shall contribute alike to the desired end."

"How, my father," said the page, "my suspicions are then true!—Douglas loves"—

"He does; and with a love as much misplaced as thine own; but beware of him—cross him not—thwart him not."

"Let him not cross or thwart me," said the page; "for I will not yield him an inch of way, had he in his body the soul of every Douglas that has lived since the time of the Dark Grey Man."

"Nay, have patience, idle boy, and reflect that your suit can never interfere with his—a truce with these vanities, and let us

better employ the little space which it still remains to us to spend together. To thy knees, my son, and resume the long interrupted duty of confession; that, happen what may, the hour may find in thee a faithful Catholic, relieved from the guilt of his sins by authority of the Holy Church. Could I but tell thee, Roland, the joy with which I see thee once more put thy knee to its best and fittest use! *Quid dicis, mi fili?*"

"*Culpas meas,*" answered the youth; and according to the ritual of the Catholic Church, he confessed and received absolution, to which was annexed the condition of performing certain enjoined penances.

When this religious ceremony was ended, an old man, in the dress of a peasant of the better order, approached the arbour and greeted the Abbot—"I have waited the conclusion of your devotions," he said, "to tell you the youth is sought after by the Chamberlain, and it were well he were to appear without delay. Holy Saint Francis, if the halberdiers were to seek him here,

they might sorely wrong my garden-plot—they are in office and reck not where they tread, were each step on jessamine and clove-jilliflowers."

"We will speed him forth, my brother," said the Abbot; "but alas! is it possible that such trifles should live in your mind at a crisis so awful as that which is now impending?"

"Reverend father," answered the proprietor of the garden, for such he was, "how oft shall I pray you to keep your high counsel for high minds like your own? What have you required of me, that I have not granted unresistingly, though with a sore heart?"

"I would require of you to be yourself, my brother," said the Abbot Ambrosius; "to remember what you were, and to what your early vows have bound you."

"I tell thee, Father Ambrosius," replied the gardener, "the patience of the best saint that ever said pater-noster, would be exhausted by the trials to which you have

put mine—What I have been, it skills not to speak at present—no one knows better than yourself, father, what I renounced, in hopes to find ease and quiet during the remainder of my days—and no one better knows how my retreat has been invaded, my fruit-trees broken, my flower-beds trodden down, my quiet frightened away, and my very sleep driven from my bed, since ever this poor Queen, God bless her, hath been sent to Lochleven.—I blame her not; being a prisoner, it is natural she should wish to get out from so vile a hold, where there is scarce any place even for a tolerable garden, and where the water-mists, as I am told, blight all the early blossoms —I say, I cannot blame her for endeavouring for her freedom; but why I should be drawn into the scheme—why my harmless arbours, that I planted with my own hands, should become places of privy conspiracy —why my little quay, which I built for my own fishing boat, should have become a haven for secret embarkations—in short, why

I should be dragged into matters where both heading and hanging are like to be the issue, I profess to you, reverend father, I am totally ignorant."

"My brother," answered the Abbot, "you are wise, and ought to know"——

"I am not—I am not—I am not wise," replied the horticulturist, pettishly, and stopping his ears with his fingers—"I was never called wise, but when men wanted to engage me in some action of notorious folly."

"But, my good brother," said the Abbot"——

"I am not good neither," said the gardener; "I am neither good nor wise—Had I been wise, you would not have been admitted here; and were I good, methinks I would send you elsewhere, to hatch plots for destroying the quiet of the country. What signifies disputing about queen or king, when men may sit at peace—*sub umbra vitis sui;* and so would I do, after the precept of holy writ, were I, as you term

me, wise or good. But such as I am, my neck is in the yoke, and you make me draw what weight you list.—Follow me, youngster. This reverend father, who makes in his jack-man's dress nearly as reverend a figure as I myself, will agree with me in one thing at least, and that is, that you have been long enough here."

"Follow the good father, Roland," said the Abbot, "and remember my words—a day is approaching that will try the temper of all true Scotsmen—may thy heart prove faithful as the steel of thy blade!"

The page bowed in silence, and they parted; the gardener, notwithstanding his advanced age, walking on before him very briskly, and muttering as he went, partly to himself, partly to his companion, after the manner of old men of weakened intellects—"When I was great," thus run his maundering, "and had my mule and my ambling palfrey at command, I warrant you I could have as well flown through the air as have walked at this pace. I had my

gout and my rheumatics, and an hundred things beside, that hung fetters on my heels; and now, thanks to Our Lady, and honest labour, I can walk with any good man of my age in the kingdom of Fife—Fie upon it, that experience should be so long in coming."

As he was thus muttering, his eye fell upon the branch of a pear tree, which drooped down for want of support, and at once forgetting his haste, the old man stopped and set seriously about binding it up. Roland Græme had both readiness, neatness of hand, and good nature in abundance; he immediately lent his aid, and in a minute or two the bough was supported, and tied up in a way perfectly satisfactory to the old man, who looked at it with great complaisance. "They are bargamots," he said, "and if you will come ashore in autumn, you shall taste of them—the like are not in Lochleven Castle—the garden there is a poor pin-fold, and the gardener, Hugh Houkham, hath little skill of his

craft—so come ashore, Master Page, in autumn, when you would eat pears. But what am I thinking of—ere that time come, they may have given thee sour pears for plums. Take an old man's advice, youth, one who hath seen many days, and sat in higher places than thou canst hope for—bend thy sword into a pruning-hook, and make a dibble of thy dagger—thy days shall be the longer, and thy health the better for it, and come to aid me in my garden, and I will teach thee the real French fashion of *imping*, which the Southron call graffing. Do this, and do it without loss of time, for there is a whirlwind coming over the land, and only those shall escape who lie too much beneath the storm to have their boughs broken by it."

So saying, he dismissed Roland Græme, through a door different from that by which he had entered, signed a cross, and pronounced a benedicite, as they parted, and then, still muttering to himself, retired into the garden, and locked the door on the inside.

CHAPTER III.

Pray God she prove not masculine ere long!
King Henry VI.

DISMISSED from the old man's garden, Roland Græme found that a grassy paddock, in which sauntered two cows, the property of the gardener, still separated him from the village. He paced through it, lost in meditation upon the words of the Abbot. Father Ambrosius had, with success enough, exerted over him that reverential influence which the guardians and instructors of our childhood possess over our more mature youth. And yet, when Roland looked back upon what the father had said, he could not but suspect that he had rather sought to evade entering into the controversy be-

twixt the churches, than to repel the objections and satisfy the doubts which the lectures of Henderson had excited. "For this he had no time," said the page to himself, "neither have I now calmness and learning sufficient to judge upon points of such magnitude. Besides, it were base to quit my faith while the wind of fortune sets against it, unless I were so placed that my conversion, should it take place, were free as light from the imputation of self-interest. I was bred a Catholic—bred in the faith of Bruce and Wallace—I will hold that faith till time and reason shall convince me that it errs. I will serve this poor Queen as a subject should serve an imprisoned and wronged sovereign—they who placed me in her service have to blame themselves—they sent me hither, a gentleman trained in the paths of loyalty and honour, when they should have sought out some truckling, cogging, double-dealing knave, who would have been at once the observant page of the Queen, and the obsequious spy

of her enemies. Since I must chuse betwixt aiding and betraying her, I will decide as becomes her servant and her subject; but Catherine Seyton—Catherine Seyton, beloved by Douglas, and holding me on or off as the intervals of her leisure or caprice will permit—how shall I deal with the coquette?—By heaven, when I next have an opportunity, she shall render me some reason for her conduct, or I will break with her for ever."

As he formed this doughty resolution, he crossed the stile which led out of the little enclosure, and was almost immediately greeted by Dr Luke Lundin.

"Ha! my most excellent young friend," said the Doctor, "from whence come you? but I note the place.—Yes, neighbour Blinkhoolie's garden is a pleasant rendezvous, and you are of the age when lads look after a bonny lass with one eye, and a dainty plum with another. But hey! you look subtrist and melancholic—I fear the maiden has proved cruel, or the plums unripe; and

surely, I think neighbour Blinkhoolie's damsons can scarce have been well preserved throughout the winter—he spares the saccharine juice on his confects. But courage, man, there are more Kates in Kinross; and for the immature fruit, a glass of my double distilled *aqua mirabilis—probatum est.*"

The page darted an ireful glance at the facetious physician; but presently recollecting that the name Kate, which had provoked his displeasure, was probably but introduced for the sake of alliteration, he suppressed his wrath, and only asked if the wains had been heard of?

"Why, I have been seeking for you this hour, to tell you that the stuff is in your boat, and that the boat waits your pleasure. Auchtermuchty had only fallen into company with an idle knave like himself, and a stoup of aquavitæ between them. Your boatmen lie on their oars, and there have already been made two wefts from the warder's turret, to intimate that those in the castle are impatient for your return. Yet

there is time for you to take a slight repast; and, as your friend and physician, I hold it unfit you should face the water-breeze with an empty stomach."

Roland Græme had nothing for it but to return, with such cheer as he might, to the place where his boat was moored on the beach, and resisted all offer of refreshment, although the Doctor promised that he should prelude the collation with a gentle appetizer—a decoction of herbs, gathered and distilled by himself. Indeed, as Roland had not forgotten the contents of his morning cup, it is possible that the recollection induced him to stand firm in his refusal of all food, to which such an unpalateable preface was to be annexed. As they passed towards the boat, (for the ceremonious politeness of the worthy Chamberlain would not permit the page to go thither without attendance,) Roland Græme, amidst a group who seemed to be assembled around a party of wandering musicians, distinguished, as he

thought, the dress of Catherine Seyton. He shook himself clear from his attendant, and at one spring was in the midst of the crowd, and at the side of the damsel. "Catherine," he whispered, "is it well for you to be still here?—will you not return to the castle?"

"To the devil with your Catherines and your castles!" answered the maiden, snappishly; "have you not had time enough already to get rid of your follies? Begone! I desire not your farther company, and there will be danger in thrusting it upon me."

"Nay—but if there be danger, fairest Catherine," replied Roland, "why will you not allow me to stay and share it with you?"

"Intruding fool," said the maiden, "the danger is all on thine own side—the risk is, in plain terms, that I strike thee on the mouth with the hilt of my dagger." So saying, she turned haughtily from him, and moved through the crowd, who gave way in some astonishment at the masculine ac-

tivity with which she forced her way among them.

As Roland, though much irritated, prepared to follow, he was grappled on the other side by Doctor Luke Lundin, who reminded him of the loaded boat, of the two wefts, or signals with the flag, which had been made from the tower, of the danger of the cold breeze to an empty stomach, and of the vanity of spending more time upon coy wenches and sour plums. Roland was thus, in a manner, dragged back to his boat, and obliged to launch her forth upon his return to Lochleven Castle.

That little voyage was speedily accomplished, and the page was greeted at the landing-place by the severe and caustic welcome of old Dryfesdale. "So, young gallant, you are come at last, after a delay of six hours, and after two signals from the castle. But, I warrant, some idle junketting had occupied you too deeply to think of your service or your duty. Where is the note of the plate and household stuff?—

Pray Heaven it hath not been diminished under the sleeveless care of so young a gad-about."

"Diminished under my care, Sir Steward?" retorted the page angrily; "say so in earnest, and by heaven your grey hair shall hardly protect your saucy tongue!"

"A truce with your swaggering, young Esquire," returned the steward; "we have bolts and dungeons for brawlers. Go to my lady, and swagger before her, if thou darest—she will give thee proper cause of offence, for she has waited thee long and impatiently."

"And where then is the Lady of Lochleven?" said the page; "for I conceive it is of her thou speakest."

"Ay—of whom else?" replied Dryfesdale; "or who besides the Lady of Lochleven hath a right to command in this castle?"

"The Lady of Lochleven is thy mistress," said Roland Græme; "but mine is the Queen of Scotland."

The steward looked at him fixedly for a moment, with an air in which suspicion and dislike were ill concealed by an affectation of contempt. "The bragging cock-chicken," he said, "will betray himself by his rath crowing. I have marked thy changed manner in the chapel of late—ay, and your changing of glances at meal-time with a certain idle damsel, who, like thyself, laughs at all gravity and goodness. There is something about you, my master, which should be looked to. But, if you would know whether the Lady of Lochleven or that other lady hath right to command thy service, thou wilt find them together in the Lady Mary's anti-room."

Roland hastened thither, not unwilling to escape from the ill-natured penetration of the old man, and marvelling at the same time what peculiarity could have occasioned the Lady of Lochleven's being in the Queen's apartment at this time of the afternoon, so much contrary to her usual wont. His

acuteness instantly penetrated the meaning. "She wishes," he concluded, "to see the meeting betwixt the Queen and me on my return, that she may form a guess whether there is any private intelligence or understanding betwixt us—I must be guarded."

With this resolution he entered the parlour, where the Queen, seated in her chair, with the Lady Fleming leaning upon the back of it, had already kept the Lady of Lochleven standing in her presence for the space of nearly an hour, to the manifest increase of her very visible bad humour. Roland Græme, on entering the apartment, made a deep obeisance to the Queen and another to the Lady, and then stood still as if to await their further question. Speaking almost together, the Lady Lochleven said, "So, young man, you are returned at length?"

And then stopped indignantly short, while the Queen went on without regarding her—"Roland, you are welcome home

to us—you have proved the true dove and not the raven—Yet I am sure I could have forgiven you, if, once dismissed from this water-circled ark of ours, you had never again returned to us. I trust you have brought back an olive branch, for our kind and worthy hostess has chafed herself much on account of your long absence, and we never needed more some symbol of peace and reconciliation."

"I grieve I should have been detained, madam," answered the page; "but from the delay of the person entrusted with the matters for which I was sent, I did not receive them till late in the day."

"See you there now," said the Queen to the Lady Lochleven; "we could not persuade you, our dearest hostess, that your household goods were in all safe-keeping and surety. True it is, that we can excuse your anxiety, considering that these august apartments are so scantily furnished, that we have not been able to offer you even the

relief of a stool during the long time you have afforded us the pleasure of your society."

"The will, madam," said the lady, "the will to offer such accommodation was more wanting than the means."

"What!" said the Queen, looking round and affecting surprise, "there are then stools in this apartment—one, two—no less than four, including the broken one—a royal garniture!—We observed them not—will it please your ladyship to sit?"

"No, madam, I will soon relieve you of my presence," replied the Lady Lochleven; "and, while with you, my aged limbs can still better brook fatigue, than my mind stoop to accept of constrained courtesy."

"Nay, Lady of Lochleven, if you take it so deeply," said the Queen, rising and motioning to her own vacant chair, "I would rather you assumed my seat—you are not the first of your family who has done so."

The Lady of Lochleven courtsied a negative, but seemed with much difficulty to suppress the angry answer which rose to her lips.

During this sharp conversation, the page's attention had been almost entirely occupied by the entrance of Catherine Seyton, who came from the inner apartment, in the usual dress in which she attended upon the Queen, and with nothing in her manner which marked either the hurry or confusion incident to a hasty change of disguise, or the conscious fear of detection in a perilous enterprize. Roland Græme ventured to make her an obeisance as she entered, but she returned it with an air of the utmost indifference, which, in his opinion, was extremely inconsistent with the circumstances in which they stood towards each other. —Surely, he thought, she cannot in reason expect to bully me out of the belief due to mine own eyes, as she tried to do concerning the apparition in the hostelry of Saint Michael's—I will try if I cannot make

her feel that this will be but a vain task, and that confidence in me is the wiser and safer course to pursue.

These thoughts had passed rapidly through his mind, when the Queen, having finished her altercation with the Lady of the Castle, again addressed him—"What of the revels at Kinross, Roland Græme? Methought they were gay, if I may judge from some faint sounds of mirth and distant music, which found their way so far as these grated windows, and died when they entered them, as all that is mirthful must—But thou lookest as sad as if thou hadst come from a conventicle of the Huguenots!"

"And so perchance he hath, madam," replied the Lady of Lochleven, at whom this side-shaft was launched. "I trust, amid yonder idle fooleries, there wanted not some pouring forth of doctrine to a better purpose than that vain mirth, which, blazing and vanishing like the crackling of dry thorns, leaves to the fools who love it nothing but dust and ashes."

"Mary Fleming," said the Queen, turning round and drawing her mantle around her, "I would that we had the chimney-grate supplied with a faggot or two of these same thorns, which the Lady of Lochleven describes so well. Methinks the damp air from the lake, which stagnates in these vaulted rooms, renders them deadly cold."

"Your Grace's pleasure shall be obeyed," said the Lady of Lochleven; "yet may I presume to remind you that we are now in summer?"

"I thank you for the information, my good lady," said the Queen; "for prisoners better learn their calendar from the mouth of their jailor, than from any change they themselves feel in the seasons.—Once more, Roland Græme, what of the revels?"

"They were gay, madam," said the page, "but of the usual sort, and little worth your Highness's ear."

"O, you know not," said the Queen, "how very indulgent my ear has become

to all that speaks of freedom and the pleasures of the free. Methinks I would rather have seen the gay villagers dance their ring round the May-pole, than have witnessed the most stately masques within the walls of a palace. The absence of stone-walls—the sense that the green turf is under the foot which may tread it free and unrestrained, is worth all that art or splendour can add to more courtly revels."

"I trust," said the Lady Lochleven, addressing the page in her turn, "there were amongst these follies none of the riots or disturbances to which they so naturally lead?"

Roland gave a slight glance to Catherine Seyton, as if to bespeak her attention as he replied,—"I witnessed no offence, madam, worthy of marking—none indeed of any kind, save that a bold damsel made her hand somewhat too familiar with the cheek of a player-man, and ran some hazard of being ducked in the lake."

As he uttered these words he cast a hasty glance at Catherine; but she sustained, with the utmost serenity of manner and countenance, the hint which he had deemed could not have been thrown out before her without exciting some fear and confusion.

"I will cumber your Grace no longer with my presence," said the Lady Lochleven, "unless you have aught to command me."

"Nought, our good hostess," answered the Queen, "unless it be to pray you, that on another occasion you deem it not needful to postpone your better employment to wait so long upon us."

"May it please you," added the Lady Lochleven, "to command this your gentleman to attend us, that I may receive some account of these matters which have been sent hither for your Grace's use."

"We may not refuse what you are pleased to require, madam," answered the Queen. "Go with the lady, Roland, if our com-

mands be indeed necessary to thy doing so. We will hear to-morrow the history of thy Kinross pleasures. For this night we dismiss thy attendance."

Roland Græme went with the Lady of Lochleven, who failed not to ask him many questions concerning what had passed at the sports, to which he rendered such answers as were most likely to lull asleep any suspicions which she might entertain of his disposition to favour Queen Mary, taking especial care to avoid all allusion to the apparition of Magdalen Græme, and of the Abbot Ambrosius. At length, after undergoing a long and somewhat close examination, he was dismissed with such expressions, as, coming from the reserved and stern Lady of Lochleven, might seem to express a degree of favour and countenance.

His first care was to obtain some refreshment, which was more cheerfully afforded him by a good-natured pantler than by Dryfesdale, who was, on this occasion, much

disposed to abide by the fashion of Pudding-burn House, where

They who came not the first call,
Gat no more meat till the next meal.

When Roland Græme had finished his repast, having his dismissal from the Queen for the evening, and being little inclined for such society as the Castle afforded, he stole into the garden, in which he had permission to spend his leisure time, when it pleased him. In this place, the ingenuity of the contriver and disposer of the walks had exerted itself to make the most of little space, and by screens, both of stone ornamented with rude sculpture, and hedges of living green, had endeavoured to give as much intricacy and variety as the confined limits of the garden would admit.

Here the young man walked sadly, considering the events of the day, and comparing what had dropped from the Abbot with what he had himself noticed of the demeanour of George Douglas. It must be so, was the painful but inevitable con-

clusion at which he arrived. It must be by his aid that she is thus enabled, like a phantom, to transport herself from place to place, and to appear at pleasure on the mainland or on the islet. It must be so, he repeated once more; with him she holds a close, secret, and intimate correspondence, altogether inconsistent with the eye of favour which she has sometimes cast upon me, and destructive to the hopes which she must have known these glances have necessarily inspired. And yet, (for love will hope where reason despairs,) the thought rushed on his mind, that it was possible she only encouraged Douglas's passion so far as might serve her mistress's interest, and that she was of too frank, noble, and candid a nature to hold out to himself hopes which she meant not to fulfil. Lost in these various conjectures, he seated himself upon a bank of turf, which commanded a view of the lake on the one side, and on the other of that front of the castle alongst which the Queen's apartments were situated.

The sun had now for some time set, and the twilight of May was rapidly fading into a serene night. On the lake, the expanded water rose and fell, with the slightest and softest influence of a southern breeze, which scarcely dimpled the surface over which it passed. In the distance was still seen the dim outline of the island of Saint Serf, once visited by many a sandalled pilgrim, as the blessed spot trodden by a man of God—now neglected, or violated, as the refuge of lazy priests, who had with justice been compelled to give place to the sheep and the heifers of a protestant baron.

As Roland gazed on the dark speck, amid the lighter blue of the waters which surrounded it, the mazes of polemical discussion again stretched themselves before the eye of his mind. Had these men justly suffered their exile as licentious drones, the robbers, at once, and disgrace of the busy hive; or, had the hand of avarice and rapine expelled from the temple, not the ri-

balds who polluted, but the faithful priests who served the shrine in honour and fidelity? The arguments of Henderson, in this contemplative hour, rose with double force before him, and could scarce be parried by the appeal which the Abbot Ambrosius had made from his understanding to his feelings,—an appeal which he had felt more forcibly amid the bustle of stirring life, than it now seemed to his more undisturbed reflection. It required an effort to divert his mind from this embarrassing topic; and he found that he best succeeded by turning his eyes to the front of the tower, watching where a twinkling light still streamed from the casement of Catherine Seyton's apartment, obscured by times for a moment, as the shadow of the fair inhabitant passed betwixt the taper and the window. At length the light was removed or extinguished, and that object of speculation was also withdrawn from the eyes of the meditative lover. Dare I con-

fess the fact, without injuring his character for ever as a hero of romance? These eyes gradually became heavy, speculative doubts on the subject of religious controversy, and anxious conjectures concerning the state of his mistress's affections, became confusedly blended together in his musings; the fatigues of a busy day prevailed over the harassing subjects of contemplation which occupied his mind, and he fell fast asleep.

Sound were his slumbers, until they were suddenly dispelled by the iron tongue of the castle bell, which sent its deep and sullen sounds wide over the bosom of the lake, and awakened the echoes of Bennarty, the hill which descends steeply on its southern bank. Roland started up, for this bell was always tolled at ten o'clock, as the signal for locking the castle gates, and placing the keys under the charge of the seneschal. He therefore hastened to the wicket, by which the garden communicated with the building, and had the mortification, just as he reach-

ed it, to hear the bolt leave its sheath with a discordant crash, and enter the stone groove of the door-lintel.

"Hold, hold," cried the page, "and let me in ere you lock the wicket."

The voice of Dryfesdale replied from within, in his usual tone of embittered sullenness—"The hour is passed, fair master—you like not the inside of these walls—even make it a complete holiday, and pass the night as well as the day out of bounds."

"Open the door," exclaimed the indignant page, "or by Saint Giles I will make thy gold chain smoke for it!"

"Make no alarm here," retorted the impenetrable Dryfesdale, "but keep thy sinful oaths and silly threats for those that regard them—I do mine office, and carry the keys to the seneschal.—Adieu, my young master; the cool night air will advantage your hot blood."

The steward was right in what he said; for the cooling breeze was very necessary to appease the feverish fit of anger which

Roland experienced, nor did the remedy succeed for some time. At length, after some hasty turns made through the garden, exhausting his passion in vain vows of vengeance, Roland Græme began to be sensible that his situation ought rather to be held as matter of laughter, than of serious resentment. To one bred a sportsman, a night spent in the open air had in it little of hardship, and the poor malice of the steward seemed more worthy of his contempt than his anger. I would to God, he said, that the grim old man may always have contented himself with such sportive revenge. He often looks as he were capable of doing us a darker turn. Returning, therefore, to the turf-seat which he had formerly occupied, and which was partially sheltered by a trim fence of green holly, he drew his mantle around him, stretched himself at length on the verdant settle, and endeavoured to resume that sleep which the castle-bell had interrupted to so little purpose.

Sleep, like other earthly blessings, is nig-

gard of its favours when most courted. The more Roland invoked her aid the further she fled from his eye-lids. He had been completely awakened, first by the sounds of the bell, and then by his own aroused vivacity of temper, and he found it difficult again to compose himself to slumber. At length, when his mind was wearied out with a maze of unpleasing meditation, he succeeded in coaxing himself into a broken slumber. This was again dispelled by the voices of two persons who were walking in the garden, the sound of whose conversation, after mingling for some time in the page's dreams, at length succeeded in awaking him thoroughly. He raised himself from his reclining posture in the utmost astonishment, which the circumstance of hearing two persons at that late hour conversing on the outside of the watchfully guarded Castle of Lochleven was so well calculated to excite. His first thought was upon supernatural beings; his next, upon some attempt on the part of

Queen Mary's friends and followers; his last was, that George of Douglas, possessed of the keys, and having the means of ingress and egress at pleasure, was availing himself of his office to hold a rendezvous with Catherine Seyton in the castle garden. He was confirmed in this opinion by the tone of the voice, which asked in a low whisper, whether all was ready.

CHAPTER IV.

In some breasts passion lies conceal'd and silent,
Like war's swart powder in a castle-vault,
Until occasion, like the linstock, lights it:
Then comes at once the lightning and the thunder,
And distant echoes tell that all is rent asunder.

Old Play.

ROLAND GRÆME, availing himself of a breach in the holly screen, and of the assistance of the full moon, which was now arisen, had a perfect opportunity, himself unobserved, to reconnoitre the persons and the motions of those by whom his rest had been thus unexpectedly disturbed, and his observations confirmed his jealous apprehensions. They stood together in close and earnest conversation within four yards of the place of his retreat, and he could easily recognize the tall form and deep voice of

Douglas, and the no less remarkable dress and tone of the page at the hostelry of Saint Michael's.

" I have been at the door of the page's apartment," said Douglas, " but he is not there, or he will not answer. It is fast bolted on the inside, as is the custom, and we cannot pass through it—and what his silence may bode I know not."

" You have trusted him too far," said the other ; " a feather-headed coxcomb, upon whose changeable mind and hot brain there is no making an abiding impression:"

" It was not I who was willing to trust him," said Douglas ; " but I was assured he would prove friendly when called upon—for"——Here he spoke so low that Roland lost the tenor of his words, which was the more provoking, as he was fully aware that he was himself the subject of their conversation.

" Nay," replied the stranger, more aloud, " I have on my side put him off with fair

words, which make fools fain—but now, if you distrust him at the push, deal with him with your dagger, and so make open passage."

"That were too rash," said Douglas; "and, besides, as I told you, the door of his apartment is shut and bolted. I will essay again to waken him."

Græme instantly comprehended, that the ladies having been somehow made aware of his being in the garden, had secured the door of the outer room in which he usually slept, as a sort of centinel upon that only access to the Queen's apartments. But then how came Catherine Seyton to be abroad, if the Queen and the other lady were still within their chambers, and the access to them locked and bolted?—"I will be instantly at the bottom of these mysteries," he said, "and then thank Mrs Catherine, if this be really she, for the kind use which she exhorted Douglas to make of his dagger—they seek me, as I comprehend, and they shall not seek me in vain."

Douglas had by this time re-entered the castle by the wicket, which was now open. The stranger stood alone in the garden walk, his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes cast impatiently up to the moon, as if accusing her of betraying him by the magnificence of her lustre. In a moment Roland Græme stood before him—" A goodly night," he said, " Mrs Catherine, for a young lady to stray forth in disguise, and to meet with men in an orchard."

" Hush!" said the stranger page, " hush, thou foolish patch, and tell us in a word if thou art friend or foe."

" How should I be friend to one who deceives me by fair words, and who would have Douglas deal with me with his poniard?" replied Roland.

" The fiend receive George of Douglas and thee too, thou born mad-cap and sworn marplot," said the other; " we shall be discovered, and then death is the word."

" Catherine," said the page, " you have dealt falsely and cruelly with me, and the

moment of explanation is now come—neither it nor you shall escape me."

"Madman!" said the stranger, "I am neither Kate nor Catherine—the moon shines bright enough surely to know the hart from the hind."

"That shift shall not serve you, fair mistress," said the page, laying hold on the lap of the stranger's cloak; "this time, at least, I will know with whom I deal."

"Unhand me," said she, endeavouring to extricate herself from his grap, and in a tone where anger seemed to contend with a desire to laugh; "use you so little discretion towards a daughter of Seyton?"

But as Roland, encouraged perhaps by her risibility to suppose his violence was not unpardonably offensive, kept hold on her mantle, she said, in a sterner tone of unmixed resentment,—"Madman, let me go!—there is life and death in this moment—I would not willingly hurt thee, and yet, beware!"

As she spoke she made a sudden effort

to escape, and in doing so, a pistol, which she carried in her hand or about her person, went off.

This warlike sound instantly awakened the well-warded castle. The warder blew his horn, and began to toll the castle-bell, crying out at the same time, "Fie, treason! treason! cry all! cry all!"

The apparition of Catherine Seyton, which the page had let loose in the first moment of astonishment, vanished in darkness, but the plash of oars was heard, and in a second or two, five or six harquebusses and a falconet were fired from the battlements of the castle successively, as if levelled at some object on the water. Confounded with these incidents, no way for Catherine's protection (supposing her to be in the boat which he had heard put from the shore) occurred to Roland, save to have recourse to George of Douglas. He hastened for this purpose towards the apartment of the Queen, whence he heard loud voices and much trampling of feet. When

he entered, he found himself added to a confused and astonished group, which, assembled in that apartment, stood gazing upon each other. At the upper end of the room stood the Queen, equipped as for a journey, and attended not only by the Lady Fleming, but by the omnipresent Catherine Seyton, dressed in the habit of her own sex, and bearing in her hand the casket in which Mary kept such jewels as she had been permitted to retain. At the other end of the hall was the Lady of Lochleven, hastily dressed, as one startled from slumber by the sudden alarm, and surrounded by domestics, some bearing torches, others holding naked swords, partizans, pistols, or such other weapons as they had caught up in the hurry of a night alarm. Betwixt these two parties stood George of Douglas, his arms folded on his breast, his eyes bent on the ground, like a criminal who knows not how to deny, yet continues unwilling to avow the guilt in which he has been detected.

"Speak, George of Douglas," said the Lady of Lochleven; "speak, and clear the horrid suspicion which rests on thy name. Say 'a Douglas was never faithless to his trust, and I am a Douglas.' Say this, my dearest son, and it is all I ask thee to say to clear thy name, even under such a foul charge. Say it was but the wile of these unhappy women, and this false boy, which plotted an escape so fatal to Scotland—so destructive to thy father's house."

"Madam," said old Dryfesdale the steward, "this much do I say for this silly page, that he could not be accessary to unlocking the doors, since I myself this night bolted him out of the castle. Whoever limned this night-piece, the lad's share in it seems to have been small."

"Thou liest, Dryfesdale," said the lady, "and wouldst throw the blame on thy master's house, to save the worthless life of a gipsey boy."

"His death were more desirable to me

than his life," answered the steward, sullenly; "but the truth is the truth"——

At these words Douglas raised his head, drew up his figure to its full height, and spoke boldly and sedately, as one whose resolution was taken. "Let no life be endangered for me. I alone"——

"Douglas," said the Queen, interrupting him, "art thou mad? Speak not, I charge you."

"Madam," he replied, bowing with the deepest respect, "gladly would I obey your commands, but they must have a victim, and let it be the true one.—Yes, madam," he continued, addressing the Lady of Lochleven, "I alone am guilty in this matter. If the word of a Douglas has yet any weight with you, believe me that this boy is innocent; and, on your conscience, I charge you do him no wrong; nor let the Queen suffer hardship for embracing the opportunity of freedom which sincere loyalty—which a sentiment yet deeper—offered to her acceptance. Yes! I had planned the escape

of the most beautiful, the most persecuted of women; and far from regretting that I, for a while, deceived the malice of her enemies, I glory in it, and am most willing to yield up life itself in her cause."

"Now, may God have comfort on my age," said the Lady of Lochleven, "and enable me to bear this load of affliction! O Princess, born in a luckless hour, when will you cease to be the instrument of seduction and of ruin to all who approach you! O ancient house of Lochleven famed so long for birth and honour, evil was the hour brought the deceiver under thy roof!"

"Say not so, madam," replied her grandson; "the old honours of the Douglas line will be outshone, when one of its descendants dies for the most injured of queens—for the most lovely of women."

"Douglas," said the Queen, "must I at this moment—ay, even at this moment, when I may lose a faithful subject for ever, chide thee for forgetting what is due to me as thy Queen?"

"Wretched boy," said the distracted Lady of Lochleven, "hast thou fallen even thus far into the snare of this Moabitish woman?—hast thou bartered thy name, thy allegiance, thy knightly oath, thy duty to thy parents, thy country, and thy God, for a feigned tear, or a sickly smile, from lips which flattered the infirm Francis—lured to death the idiot Darnley—read luscious poetry with the minion Chastelet—mingled in the lays of love which were sung by the beggar Rizzio—and which were joined in rapture to those of the foul and licentious Bothwell?"

"Blaspheme not, madam!" said Douglas; —"nor you, fair Queen, and virtuous as fair, chide at this moment the presumption of thy vassal!—Think not that the mere devotion of a subject could have moved me to the part I have been performing. Well you deserve that each of your lieges should die for you; but I have done more—have done that to which love alone could compel a Douglas—I have dissembled. Farewell, then,

Queen of all hearts, and Empress of that of Douglas!—When you are freed from this vile bondage—as freed you shall be, if justice remains in Heaven—and when you load with honours and titles the happy man who shall deliver you, cast one thought on him whose heart would have despised every reward for a kiss of your hand—cast one thought on his fidelity, and drop one tear on his grave." And throwing himself at her feet, he seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"This before my face!" said the Lady of Lochleven—"wilt thou court thy adulterous paramour before the eyes of a parent?—Tear them asunder, and put him under strict ward! Seize him, upon your lives!" she added, seeing that her attendants looked on each other with hesitation.

"They are doubtful," said Mary. "Save thyself, Douglas, I command thee!"

He started up from the floor, and only exclaiming, "My life or death are yours,

and at your disposal!"—drew his sword, and broke through those who stood betwixt him and the door. The enthusiasm of his onset was too sudden and too lively to have been opposed by any thing short of the most decided opposition; and as he was both loved and feared by his father's vassals, none of them would offer him actual injury.

The Lady of Lochleven stood astonished at his sudden escape—"Am I surrounded," she said, "by traitors? Upon him, villains! —pursue, stab, cut him down!"

"He cannot leave the island, madam," said Dryfesdale, interfering; "I have the key of the boat-chain."

But two or three voices of those who pursued from curiosity, or command of their mistress, exclaimed from below, that he had cast himself into the lake.

"Brave Douglas still!" exclaimed the Queen—"O, true and noble heart, that prefers death to imprisonment!"

"Fire upon him!" said the Lady of Loch-

leven; "if there be here a true servant of his father, let him shoot the runagate dead, and let the lake cover our shame!"

The report of a gun or two were heard, but they were probably shot rather to obey the Lady, than with any purpose of hitting the mark; and Randal immediately entering, said, that Master George had been taken up by a boat from the castle, which lay at a little distance.

"Man a barge, and pursue them!" said the lady.

"It were quite vain," said Randal; "by this time they are half way to shore, and a cloud has come over the moon."

"And has the traitor then escaped?" said the lady, pressing her hands against her forehead with a gesture of despair; "the honour of our house is for ever gone, and all will be deemed accomplices in this base treachery."

"Lady of Lochleven," said Mary, advancing towards her, "you have this night cut off my fairest hopes—You have turned my

expected freedom into bondage, and dashed away the cup of joy in the very instant I was advancing it to my lips—and yet I feel for your sorrow the pity that you deny to mine—Gladly would I comfort you if I might; but as I may not, I would at least part from you in charity."

"Away, proud woman!" said the lady; "who ever knew so well as thou to deal the deepest wounds under the pretence of kindness and courtesy?—Who, since the great traitor, could ever so betray with a kiss?"

"Lady Douglas of Lochleven," said the Queen, "in this moment thou canst not offend me—no, not even by thy coarse and unwomanly language, held to me in the presence of menials and armed retainers. I have this night owed so much to one member of the house of Lochleven, as to cancel whatever its mistress can do or say in the wildness of her passion."

"We are bounden to you, Princess," said Lady Lochleven, putting a strong constraint

on herself, and passing from her tone of violence to that of bitter irony; "our poor house hath been but seldom graced with royal smiles, and will hardly, with my choice, exchange their rough honesty for such court-honour as Mary of Scotland has now to bestow."

"They," replied Mary, "who knew so well how to *take*, may think themselves excused from the obligation implied in receiving. And that I have now little to offer, is the fault of the Douglasses and their allies."

"Fear nothing, madam," replied the Lady of Lochleven, in the same bitter tone, "you retain an exchequer which neither your own prodigality can drain, nor your offended country deprive you of. While you have fair words and delusive smiles at command, you need no other bribes to lure youth to folly."

The Queen cast a not ungratified glance on a large mirror, which, hanging on one side of the apartment, and illuminated by the torch-light, reflected her beautiful face

and person. " Our hostess grows complaisant," she said, " my Fleming; we had not thought that grief and captivity had left us so well stored with that sort of wealth which ladies prize most dearly."

" Your Grace will drive this severe woman frantic," said Fleming, in a low tone. " On my knees I implore you to remember she is already dreadfully offended, and that we are in her power."

" I will not spare her, Fleming," answered the Queen; " it is against my nature. She returned my honest sympathy with insult and abuse, and I will gall her in return —If her words are too blunt for answer, let her use her poniard if she dare."

" The Lady Lochleven," said the Lady Fleming aloud, " would surely do well now to withdraw, and to leave her Grace to repose."

" Ay," replied the lady, " or to leave her Grace, and her Grace's minions, to think what silly fly they may next wrap their meshes about. My eldest son is a widower

—were he not more worthy the flattering hopes with which you have seduced his brother?—True, the yoke of marriage has been already thrice fitted on—but the church of Rome calls it a sacrament, and its votaries may deem it one in which they cannot too often participate."

"And the votaries of the church of Geneva," replied Mary, colouring with indignation, "as they deem marriage *no* sacrament, are said at times to dispense with the holy ceremony."—Then, as if afraid of the consequences of this home allusion to the errors of Lady Lochleven's early life, the Queen added, "Come, my Fleming, we grace her too much by this altercation, we will to our sleeping apartment. If she would disturb us again to-night, she must cause the door to be forced." So saying, she retired to her bed-room, followed by her two women.

Lady Lochleven, stunned as it were by this last sarcasm, and not the less deeply incensed that she had drawn it upon her-

self, remained like a statue on the spot which she had occupied, when she received an affront so flagrant. Dryfesdale and Randal endeavoured to rouse her to recollection by questions.

"What is your honourable ladyship's pleasure in the premises?"

"Shall we not double the centinels, and place one upon the boats and another in the garden?" said Randal.

"Would you that dispatches were sent to Sir William at Edinburgh, to acquaint him with what has happened?" demanded Dryfesdale; "and ought not the place of Kinross to be alarmed, lest there be force upon the shores of the lake?"

"Do all as thou wilt," said the lady, collecting herself, and about to depart. "Thou hast the name of a good soldier, Dryfesdale, take all precautions.—Sacred heaven! that I should be thus openly upbraided!"

"Would it be your pleasure," said Dryfesdale, hesitating, "that this person—this lady—be more severely restrained?"

" No, vassal!" answered the lady indignantly, " my revenge stoops not to such a low gratification. But I will have more worthy vengeance, or the tomb of my ancestors shall cover my shame."

" And you shall have it, madam," replied Dryfesdale—" Ere two suns go down, you shall term yourself amply revenged."

The lady made no answer—perhaps did not hear his words, as she presently left the apartment. By the command of Dryfesdale, the rest of the attendants were dismissed, some to do the duty of guard, others to their repose. The steward himself remained after they had all departed; and Roland Græme, who was alone in the apartment, was surprised to see the old soldier advance towards him with an air of greater cordiality than he had ever before assumed towards him, but which sat ill on his scowling features.

" Youth," he said, " I have done thee some wrong—it is thine own fault, for thy behaviour hath seemed as light to me as

the feather thou wearest in thy hat; and surely thy fantastic apparel, and idle humour of mirth and folly, have made me construe thee something harshly. But I saw this night from my casement, (as I looked out to see how thou hadst disposed of thyself in the garden,) I saw, I say, the true efforts which thou didst make to detain the companion of the perfidy of him who is no longer worthy to be called by his father's name, but must be cut off from his house like a rotten branch. I was just about to come to thy assistance when the pistol went off; and the warder, (a false knave, whom I suspect to be bribed for the nonce,) saw himself forced to give the alarm, which, perchance, till then he had wilfully withheld. To atone, therefore, for my injustice towards you, I would willingly render you a courtesy, if you would accept of it from my hands."

"May I first crave to know what it is?" replied the page.

"Simply to carry the news of this disco-

very to Holyrood, where thou mayest do thyself much grace, as well with the Earl of Morton and the Regent himself, as with Sir William Douglas, seeing thou hast seen the matter from end to end, and borne faithful part therein. The making thine own fortune will be thus lodged in thine own hand, when I trust thou wilt estrange thyself from foolish vanities, and learn to walk in this world as one who thinks upon the next."

"Sir Steward," said Roland Græme, "I thank you for your courtesy, but I may not do your errand. I pass that I am the Queen's sworn servant, and may not be of counsel against her. But, setting this apart, methinks it were a bad road to Sir William of Lochleven's favour, to be the first to tell him of his son's defection—neither would the Regent be over well pleased to hear the infidelity of his vassal, nor Morton to learn the falsehood of his kinsman."

"Um!" said the steward, making that inarticulate sound which expresses surprise

mingled with displeasure. "Nay, then, even fly where ye list; for, giddy-pated as ye may be, you know how to bear you in the world."

"I will shew you my system is less selfish than ye think for," said the page; "for I hold truth and mirth to be better than gravity and cunning—ay, and in the end to be a match for them.—You never loved me less, Sir Steward, than you do at this moment. I know you will give me no real confidence, and I am resolved to accept no false protestations as current coin. Resume your old course—suspect me as much and watch me as close as you will, I bid you defiance—you have met with your match."

"By heaven, young man," said the steward, with a look of bitter malignity, "if thou darest to attempt any treachery towards the house of Lochleven, thy head shall blacken in the sun from the warder's turret!"

"He cannot commit treachery who refuses trust," said the page; "and for my head, it stands as securely on mine own

shoulders, as on any turret that ever mason built."

"Farewell, thou prating and speckled pie," said Dryfesdale, "that art so vain of thine idle tongue and variegated coat. Beware trap and lime-twig."

"And fare thee well, thou hoarse old raven," answered the page; "thy solemn flight, sable hue, and deep croak, are no charms against bird-bolt or hail-shot, and that thou mayest find—It is open war betwixt us, each for the cause of our mistress, and God shew the right!"

"Amen, and defend his own people!" said the steward. "I will let my mistress know what addition thou hast made to this mess of traitors. Good night, Monsieur Feather-pate."

"Good night, Seignior Sowersby," replied the page; and, when the old man departed, he betook himself to rest.

CHAPTER V.

Poison'd—ill fare—dead, forsooth, cast off.
King John.

Howsoever weary Roland Græme might be of the Castle of Lochleven—however much he might wish that the plan for Mary's escape had been perfected, I question if he ever awoke with more pleasing feelings than on the morning after George Douglas's plan for accomplishing her deliverance had been frustrated. In the first place, he had the clearest conviction that he had misunderstood the inuendo of the Abbot, and that the affections of Douglas were fixed, not on Catherine Seyton, but on the Queen; and in the second place, from the sort of explanation which had taken place be-

twixt the steward and him, he felt himself at liberty, without any breach of honour towards the family of Lochleven, to contribute his best aid to any scheme which should in future be formed for the Queen's escape; and, independently of the good will which he himself had to the enterprize, he knew he could find no surer road to the favour of Catherine Seyton. He now sought but an opportunity to inform her that he had dedicated himself to this task, and fortune was propitious in affording him one which was unusually favourable.

At the ordinary hour of breakfast, it was introduced by the steward with the usual forms, who, as soon as it was placed on the board in the inner apartment, said to Roland Græme, with a glance of sarcastic import, "I leave you, my young sir, to do the office of sewer—it has been too long rendered to the Lady Mary by one belonging to the house of Douglas."

"Were it the prime and principal who

ever bore the name," said Roland, "the office were an honour to him."

The steward departed without replying to this bravade, otherwise than by a dark look of scorn. Græme, thus left alone, busied himself as one engaged in a labour of love, to imitate, as well as he could, the grace and courtesy with which George of Douglas was wont to render his ceremonial service at meals to the Queen of Scotland. There was more than youthful vanity,—there was a generous devotion in the feeling with which he took up the task, as a brave soldier assumes the place of a comrade who has fallen in the front of battle. "I am now," he said, "their only champion; and, come weal, come woe, I will be, to the best of my skill and power, as faithful, as trustworthy, as brave as any Douglas of them all could have been."

At this moment Catherine Seyton entered alone, contrary to her custom; and not less contrary to her custom, she enter-

ed with her kerchief at her eyes. Roland Græme approached her with beating heart and with downcast eyes, and asked her in a low and hesitating voice, whether the Queen were well?

"Can you suppose it?" said Catherine; "think you her heart and body are framed of steel and iron, to endure the cruel disappointment of yester even, and the infamous taunts of yonder puritanic hag?—Would to God that I were a man, to aid her more effectually!"

"If those who carry pistols, and batons, and poniards," said the page, "are not men, they are at least Amazons, and that is as formidable."

"You are welcome to the flash of your wit, sir," replied the damsel; "I am neither in spirits to enjoy, or to reply to it."

"Well then," said the page, "list to me in all serious truth. And, first, let me say, that the gear last night had been smoother, had you taken me into your counsels."

"And so we meant; but who could have

guessed that Master Page should chuse to pass all night in the garden, like some moon-stricken knight in a Spanish romance—instead of being in his bed-room, when Douglas came to hold communication with him on our project?"

"And why," said the page, "defer to so late a moment so important a confidence?"

"Because your communications with Henderson, and—with pardon—the natural impetuosity and fickleness of your disposition, made us dread to entrust you with a secret of such consequence, till the last moment."

"And why at the last moment?" said the page, offended at this frank avowal; "why at that, or any other moment, since I had the misfortune to incur so much suspicion?"

"Nay—now you are angry again," said Catherine; "and to serve you aright I should break off this talk; but I will be magnanimous, and answer your question. Know, then, our reason for trusting you was

two-fold. In the first place, we could scarce avoid it, since you slept in the room through which we had to pass. In the second place"——

"Nay," said the page, "you may dispense with a second reason, when the first makes your confidence in me a case of necessity."

"Good now, hold thy peace," said Catherine. "In the second place, as I said before, there is one foolish person among us, who believes that Roland Græme's heart is warm, though his head is giddy—that his blood is pure, though it boils too hastily—and that his faith and honour are true as the load-star, though his tongue sometimes is far less than discreet."

This avowal Catherine repeated in a low tone, with her eyes fixed on the floor, as if she shunned the glance of Roland while she suffered it to escape her lips—"And this single friend," exclaimed the youth in rapture; "this only one who would do jus-

tice to the poor Roland Græme, and whose own generous heart taught her to distinguish between follies of the brain and faults of the heart—Will you not tell me, dearest Catherine, to whom I owe my most grateful, my most heartfelt thanks?"

"Nay," said Catherine, with her eyes still fixed on the ground, "if your own heart tell you not"——

"Dearest Catherine," said the page, seizing upon her hand, and kneeling on one knee.

"If your own heart, I say, tell you not," said Catherine, gently disengaging her hand, "it is very ungrateful; for since the maternal kindness of the Lady Fleming"——

The page started on his feet. "By heaven, Catherine, your tongue wears as many disguises as your person. But you only mock me, cruel girl. You know the Lady Fleming has no more regard for any one, than hath the forlorn princess who is wrought into yonder piece of old figured court-tapestry."

"It may be so," said Catherine Seyton, "but you should not speak so loud."

"Pshaw!" answered the page, but at the same time lowering his voice, "she cares for no one but herself and the Queen. And you know, besides, there is no one of you whose opinion I value, if I have not your own. No—not that of Queen Mary herself."

"The more shame for you, if it be so," said Catherine with great composure.

"Nay, but, fair Catherine," said the page, "why will you thus damp my ardour, when I am devoting myself, body and soul, to the cause of your mistress?"

"It is because in doing so," said Catherine, "you debase a cause so noble, by naming along with it any baser or more selfish motive. Believe me," she said, with kindling eyes, and while the blood mantled on her cheek, "they think vilely and falsely of women—I mean of those who deserve the name—who deem that they love the

gratification of their vanity, or the mean purpose of engrossing a lover's admiration and affection, better than they love the virtue and honour of the man they may be brought to prefer. He that serves his religion, his prince, and his country, with ardour and devotion, need not plead his cause with the common-place rant of romantic passion—the woman whom he honours with his love, becomes his debtor, and her corresponding affection is engaged to repay his glorious toil."

"You hold a glorious prize for such toil," said the youth, bending his eyes on her with enthusiasm.

"Only a heart which knows how to value it," said Catherine. "He that should free this injured Princess from these dungeons, and set her at freedom among her free and warlike nobles, whose hearts are burning to welcome her—where is the maiden in Scotland, whom the love of such a hero would not honour, were she sprung from the blood royal of the land, and he

the offspring of the poorest cottager that ever held a plough?"

"I am determined," said Roland, "to take the adventure. Tell me first, however, fair Catherine, and speak it as if you were confessing to the priest—this poor Queen, I know she is unhappy—but, Catherine, do you hold her innocent? She is accused of murder."

"Do I hold the lamb guilty, because it is assailed by the wolf?" answered Catherine; "do I hold yonder sun polluted, because an earth-damp sullies his beams?"

The page sighed and looked down. "Would my conviction were as deep as thine! But one thing is clear, that in this captivity she hath wrong—She rendered herself up on a capitulation, and the terms have been refused her—I will embrace her quarrel to the death."

"Will you—will you, indeed?" said Catherine, taking his hand in her turn. "O be but firm in mind, as thou art bold in deed and quick in resolution; keep but

thy plighted faith, and after ages shall honour thee as the saviour of Scotland."

"But when I have toiled successfully to win that Leah, Honour, thou wilt not, my Catherine," said the page, "condemn me to a new term of service for that Rachel, Love?"

"Of that," said Catherine, again extricating her hand from his grasp, "we shall have full time to speak; but Honour is the elder sister, and must be won the first."

"I may not win her," answered the page; "but I will venture fairly for her, and man can do no more. And know, fair Catherine, for you shall see the very secret thought of my heart, that not Honour only—not only that other and fairer sister, whom you frown on me for so much as mentioning—but the stern commands of duty also, compel me to aid the Queen's deliverance."

"Indeed!" said Catherine; "you were wont to have doubts on that matter."

"Ay, but her life was not then threatened," replied Roland.

"And is it now more endangered than heretofore?" asked Catherine Seyton, in anxious terror.

"Be not alarmed," said the page; "but you heard the terms on which your Royal Mistress parted with the Lady of Lochleven?"

"Too well—but too well," said Catherine; "alas! that she cannot rule her princely resentment, and refrain from encounters like these!"

"That hath passed betwixt them," said Roland, "for which woman never forgives woman. I saw the Lady's brow turn pale, and then black, when, before all the menzie, and in her moment of power, the Queen humbled her to the dust by taxing her with her shame. And I heard the oath of deadly resentment and revenge which she muttered in the ear of one, who by his answer will, I judge, be but too ready an executioner of her will."

"You terrify me," said Catherine.

"Do not so take it—call up the masculine part of your spirit—we will counteract and defeat her plans, be they dangerous as they may. Why do you look upon me thus and weep?"

"Alas!" said Catherine, "because you stand there before me a living and breathing man, in all the adventurous glow and enterprize of youth, yet still possessing the frolic spirits of childhood—there you stand, full alike of generous enterprize and childish recklessness; and if to-day, to-morrow, or some such brief space, you lie a mangled and lifeless corpse upon the floor of these hateful dungeons, who but Catherine Seyton will be the cause of your brave and gay career being broken short as you start from the goal? Alas! she whom you have chosen to twine your wreath, may too probably have to work your shroud."

"And be it so, Catherine," said the page, in the full glow of youthful enthusiasm; "and do thou work my shroud; and if thou

grace it with such tears as fall now at the thought, it will honour my remains more than an earl's mantle would my living body. But shame on this faintness of heart! the time craves a firmer mood—Be a woman, Catherine, or rather be a man—thou canst be a man if thou wilt."

Catherine dried her tears, and endeavoured to smile.

"You must not ask me," she said, "about that which so much disturbs your mind; you shall know all in time—nay, you should know all now, but that—Hush! here comes the Queen."

Mary entered from her apartment, paler than usual, and apparently exhausted by a sleepless night, and by the painful thoughts which had ill supplied the place of repose; yet the languor of her looks was so far from impairing her beauty, that it only substituted the frail delicacy of the lovely woman for the majestic grace of the Queen. Contrary to her wont, her toilette had been very hastily dispatched, and her hair, which was

usually dressed by Lady Fleming with great care, escaping from beneath the head-tire, which had been hastily adjusted, fell in long and luxuriant tresses of Nature's own curling, over a neck and bosom which were somewhat less carefully veiled than usual.

As she stepped over the threshold of her apartment, Catherine, hastily drying her tears, ran to meet her Royal Mistress, and having first kneeled at her feet, and kissed her hand, instantly rose, and placing herself on the other side of the Queen, seemed anxious to divide with the Lady Fleming the honour of supporting and assisting her. The page, on his part, advanced and put in order the chair of state, which she usually occupied, and having placed the cushion and foot-stool for her accommodation, stepped back, and stood ready for service in the place usually occupied by his predecessor, the young Seneschal. Mary's eye rested an instant on him, and could not but remark the change of persons. Her's was not the female heart which could re-

fuse compassion at least, to a gallant youth who had suffered in her cause, although he had been guided in his enterprize by a too presumptuous passion; and the words "Poor Douglas!" escaped from her lips, perhaps unconsciously, as she leant herself back in her chair, and put the kerchief to her eyes.

"Yes, gracious madam," said Catherine, assuming a cheerful manner, in order to cheer her Sovereign, "our gallant knight is indeed banished—the adventure was not reserved for him, but he has left behind him a youthful Esquire, as much devoted to your Grace's service, and who, by me, makes you tender of his hand and sword."

"If they may in aught avail your Grace," said Roland Græme, bowing profoundly.

"Alas!" said the Queen, "what needs this, Catherine?—why prepare new victims to be involved in, and overwhelmed by my cruel fortune?—were we not better cease to struggle, and ourselves sink in the tide without further resistance, than thus drag into destruction with us every generous heart

which makes an effort in our favour?—I have had but too much of plot and intrigue around me, since I was stretched an orphan child in my very cradle, while contending nobles strove which should rule in the name of the unconscious innocent. Surely time it were that all this busy and most dangerous coil should end. Let me call my prison a convent, and my seclusion a voluntary sequestration of myself from the world and its ways."

"Speak not thus, madam, before your faithful servants," said Catherine, "to discourage their zeal at once, and to break their hearts. Daughter of kings, be not in this hour so unkingly—Come, Roland, and let us, the youngest of her followers, shew ourselves worthy of her cause—let us kneel before her foot-stool, and implore her to be her own magnanimous self." And leading Roland Græme to the Queen's seat, they both kneeled down before her. Mary raised herself in her chair, and sat erect, while extending one hand to be kissed by the

page, she arranged with the other the clustering locks which shaded the bold yet lovely brow of the high-spirited Catherine.

"Alas! *ma mignonne*," she said, for so in fondness she often called her young attendant, "that you should thus desperately mix with my unhappy fate the fortune of your own young lives!—Are they not a lovely couple, my Fleming? and is it not heart-rending to think that I must be their ruin?"

"Not so," said Roland Græme, "it is we, gracious Sovereign, who will be your deliverers."

"*Ex oribus parvulorum!*" said the Queen, looking upward; "if it is by the mouth of these children that heaven calls me to resume the stately thoughts which become my birth and my rights, thou wilt grant them thy protection, and to me the power of rewarding their zeal."—Then turning to Fleming, she instantly added,—"Thou knowest, my friend, whether to make those who have served me happy, was not ever Mary's favourite pastime. When I have

been rebuked by the stern preachers of the Calvinistic heresy—when I have seen the fierce countenances of my nobles averted from me, has it not been because I mixed in the harmless pleasures of the young and gay, and rather for the sake of their happiness than my own, have mingled in the masque, the song, or the dance, with the youth of my household. Well, I repent not of it—though Knox termed it sin, and Morton degradation—I was happy, because I saw happiness around me; and woe betide the wretched jealousy that can extract guilt out of the overflowings of an unguarded gaiety!—Fleming, if we are restored to our throne, shall we not have one blithesome day at a blithesome bridal, of which we must now name neither the bride nor the bridegroom? but that bridegroom shall have the barony of Blairgowrie, a fair gift even for a Queen to give, and that bride's chaplet shall be twined with the fairest pearls that ever were found in the depths of Lochlomond; and thou thyself, Mary Fleming,

the best dresser of tires that ever busked the tresses of a queen, and who would scorn to touch those of any woman of lower rank, —thou thyself shalt for my love twine them into the bride's tresses.—Look, my Fleming, suppose them such clustered locks as those of our Catherine, they would not put shame upon thy skill."

So saying, she passed her hand fondly over the head of her youthful favourite, while her more aged attendant replied despondently, "Alas! madam, your thoughts stray far from home."

"They do, my Fleming," said the Queen, "but is it well or kind in you to call them back?—God knows, they have kept the perch this night but too closely—Come, I will recal the gay vision, were it but to punish them. Yes, at that blithesome bridal, Mary herself shall forget the weight of sorrows, and the toil of state, and herself once more lead a measure.—At whose wedding was it that we last danced, my Fleming? I think care has troubled my me-

mory—yet something of it I should remember—canst thou not aid me?—I know thou canst."

"Alas! madam," replied the lady—

"What!" said Mary, "wilt thou not help us so far? this is a peevish adherence to thine own graver opinion, which holds our talk as folly. But thou art court-bred, and wilt well understand me when I say, the Queen *commands* Lady Fleming to tell her where she led the last *branle*."

With a face deadly pale, and a mien as if she were about to sink into the earth, the court-bred dame, no longer daring to refuse obedience, faultered out—"Gracious Lady—if my memory err not—it was at a masque in Holyrood—at the marriage of Sebastian."

The unhappy Queen, who had hitherto listened with a melancholy smile, provoked by the reluctance with which the Lady Fleming brought out her story, at this ill-fated word, interrupted her with a shriek so wild and loud that the vaulted apartment

rang, and both Roland and Catherine sprung to their feet in the utmost terror and alarm. Meantime, Mary seemed, by the train of horrible ideas thus suddenly excited, surprised not only beyond self-command, but for the moment beyond the verge of reason.

"Traitress!" she said to the Lady Fleming, "thou wouldst slay thy sovereign —Call my French guards—*a moi! a moi! mes Français!*—I am beset with traitors in mine own palace—they have murdered my husband—Rescue! rescue! for the Queen of Scotland!" She started up from her chair—her features, late so exquisitely lovely in their paleness, now inflamed with the fury of frenzy, and resembling those of a Bellona. "We will take the field ourself," she said; "warn the city—warn Lothian and Fife—saddle our Spanish barb, and bid French Paris see our petronel be charged. —Better to die at the head of our brave Scotsmen, like our grandfather at Flodden,

than of a broken heart, like our ill-starred father."

"Be patient—be composed, dearest Sovereign," said Catherine; and then addressing Lady Fleming angrily, she added, "How could you say aught that reminded her of her husband?"

The word reached the ear of the unhappy Princess, who caught it up, speaking with great rapidity. "Husband!—what husband?—Not his most Christian Majesty—he is ill at ease—he cannot mount on horseback.—Not him of the Lennox—but it was the Duke of Orkney thou wouldst say."

"For God's love, madam, be patient!" said the Lady Fleming.

But the Queen's excited imagination could by no entreaty be diverted from its course. "Bid him come hither to our aid," she said, "and bring with him his lambs, as he calls them—Bowton, Hay of Talla, Black Ormiston, and his kinsman Hob—Fie! how swart they are, and how they smell of sulphur.

What! closeted with Morton? Nay, if the Douglas and the Hepburn hatch the complot together, the bird, when it breaks the shell, will scare Scotland. Will it not, my Fleming?"

"She grows wilder and wilder," said Fleming; "we have too many hearers for these strange words."

"Roland," said Catherine, "in the name of God, begone! You cannot aid us here—Leave us to deal with her alone—Away—away!"

She thrust him to the door of the anti-room; yet even when he had entered that apartment, and shut the door, he could still hear the Queen talk in a loud and determined tone, as if giving forth orders, until at length the voice died away in a feeble and continued lamentation.

At this crisis Catherine entered the anti-room. "Be not too anxious," she said, "the crisis is now over; but keep the door fast—let no one enter until she is more composed."

"In the name of God, what does this mean?" said the page; "or what was there in the Lady Fleming's words to excite so wild a transport?"

"O the Lady Fleming, the Lady Fleming," said Catherine, repeating the words impatiently; "the Lady Fleming is a fool—she loves her mistress, yet knows so little how to express her love, that were the Queen to ask her for very poison, she would deem it a point of duty not to resist her commands. I could have torn her starched head-tire from her formal head—The Queen should have as soon had the heart out of my body, as the word Sebastian out of my lips—That that piece of weaved tapestry should be a woman, and yet not have wit enough to tell a lie!"

"And what was this story of Sebastian?" said the page. "By heaven, Catherine, you are all riddles alike."

"You are as great a fool as Fleming," returned the impatient maiden; "know ye not, that on the night of Henry Darnley's

murder, and at the blowing up of the Kirk of Field, the Queen's absence was owing to her attending on a masque at Holyrood, given by her to grace the marriage of this same Sebastian, who, himself a favoured servant, married one of her female attendants who was near to her person?"

"By Saint Giles," said the page, "I wonder not at her passion, but only marvel by what forgetfulness it was that she could urge the Lady Fleming with such a question."

"I cannot account for it," said Catherine; "but it seems as if great and violent grief or horror sometimes obscure the memory, and spread a cloud like that of an exploding cannon, over the circumstances with which they are accompanied. But I may not stay here, where I came not to moralize with your wisdom, but simply to cool my resentment against that unwise Lady Fleming, which I think hath now somewhat abated, so that I shall endure her presence

without any desire to damage either her curch or vasquine. Meanwhile, keep fast that door—I would not for my life that any of these heretics saw her in the unhappy state, which, brought on her as it has been by the success of their own diabolical plottings, they would not stick to call, in their snuffling cant, the judgment of Providence.

She left the apartment just as the latch of the outward door was raised from without. But the bolt which Roland had drawn on the inside, resisted the efforts of the person desirous to enter. "Who is there?" said Græme aloud.

"It is I," replied the harsh and yet slow voice of the steward Dryfesdale.

"You cannot enter now," returned the youth.

"And wherefore?" demanded Dryfesdale, "seeing I come but to do my duty, and enquire what mean the shrieks from the apartment of the Moabitish lady. Where-

fore, I say, since such is mine errand, can I not enter?"

"Simply," replied the youth, "because the bolt is drawn, and I have no fancy to undo it. I have the right side of the door to-day, as you had last night."

"Thou art ill-advised, thou malapert boy," replied the steward, "to speak to me in such fashion; but I shall inform my lady of thine insolence."

"The insolence," said the page, "is meant for thee only, in fair guerdon of thy constant discourtesy to me. For thy lady's information, I have answer more courteous—you may say that the Queen is ill at ease, and desires to be disturbed neither by visits nor messages."

"I conjure you, in the name of God," said the old man, with more solemnity in his tone than he had hitherto used, "to let me know if her malady really gains power on her!"

"She will have no aid at your hand, or at your lady's—wherefore, begone, and trou-

ble us no more—we neither want, nor will accept of aid at your hands."

With this positive reply, the steward, grumbling, and dissatisfied, returned down stairs.

CHAPTER V

It is the curse of kings to be attended
By slaves, who take their humours for a warrant
To break into the bloody house of life,
And on the winking of authority
To understand a law.

King John.

THE Lady of Lochleven sat alone in her chamber, endeavouring, with sincere but imperfect zeal, to fix her eyes and her attention on the black-lettered Bible which lay before her, bound in velvet and embroidery, and adorned with massive silver clasps and knosps. But she found her utmost efforts unable to withdraw her mind from the resentful recollection of what had last night passed betwixt her and the Queen, in which the latter had with such bitter taunt reminded her of her early and long-repented transgression.

Why, she said, should I resent so deeply, that another reproaches me with that which I have never ceased to make matter of blushing to myself? and yet, why should this woman, who reaps—at least, has reaped, the fruits of my folly, and has jostled my son aside from the throne, why should she, in the face of all my domestics, and of her own, dare to upbraid me with my shame and folly? Is she not in my power? Does she not fear me? Ha! wily tempter, I will wrestle with thee strongly, and with better suggestions than my own evil heart can supply.

She again took up the sacred volume, and was endeavouring to fix her attention on its contents, when she was disturbed by a tap at the door of the room. It opened at her command, and the Steward Dryfesdale entered, and stood before her with a gloomy and perturbed expression on his brow.

"What has chanced, Dryfesdale, that thou lookest thus?" said his mistress—"Have

there been evil tidings of my son, or of my grandchildren?"

"No, lady," replied Dryfesdale, "but you were deeply insulted last night, and I fear me thou art as deeply avenged this morning—Where is the chaplain?"

"What mean you by hints so dark, and a question so sudden? The chaplain, as you well know, is absent at Perth upon an assembly of the brethren."

"I care not," answered the steward, "he is but a priest of Baal."

"Dryfesdale," said the Lady, sternly, "what meanest thou? I have ever heard, that in the Low Countries thou didst herd with the Anabaptist preachers, those boars which tear up the vintage—But the ministry which suits me and my house must content my retainers."

"I would I had good ghostly counsel though," replied the steward, not attending to his mistress's rebuke, and seeming to speak to himself, "this woman of Moab"——

" Speak of her with reverence," said the lady, " she is a king's daughter."

" Be it so," replied Dryfesdale ; " she goes where there is little difference betwixt her and a beggar's child—Mary of Scotland is dying."

" Dying, and in my castle !" said the Lady, starting up in alarm ; " of what disease, or by what accident ?"

" Bear patience, lady. The ministry was mine."

" Thine, villain and traitor !—how didst thou dare ?"——

" I heard you insulted, lady—I heard you demand vengeance—I promised it you, and I now bring tidings of it."

" Dryfesdale, I trust thou ravest," said the lady.

" I rave not," replied the steward ; " that which was written of me a million of years ere I saw the light, must be executed by me. She hath that in her veins that, I fear me, will soon stop the springs of life."

"Cruel villain," exclaimed the Lady, "thou hast not poisoned her?"

"And if I had," said Dryfesdale, "what does it so greatly merit? Men bane vermin —why not rid them of their enemies so? in Italy they will do it for a cruizuedor."

"Cowardly ruffian, begone from my sight!"

"Think better of my zeal, lady," said the steward, "and judge not without looking around you. Lindsay, Ruthven, and your kinsman Morton poniarded Rizzio, and yet you now see no blood on their embroidery —the Lord Semple stabbed the Lord of Sanquhar—does his bonnet sit a jot more awry on his brow? What noble lives in Scotland who has not had a share, for policy or revenge, in some such dealing?—and who imputes it to them? Be not cheated with names —a dagger or a draught work to the same end, and are little unlike—a glass phial imprisons the one, and a leathern sheath the other—one deals with the brain, the other

sluices the blood—Yet, I say not I gave aught to this lady."

"What dost thou mean by thus dallying with me?" said the lady; "as thou wouldst save thy neck from the rope it merits, tell me the whole truth of this story—thou hast long been known a dangerous man."

"Ay, in my master's service, I can be cold and sharp as my sword. Be it known to you, that when last on shore, I consulted with a woman of skill and power, called Nicneven, of whom the country has rung for this some brief time past. Fools asked her for charms to make them beloved, misers for means to increase their store; some demanded to know the future—an idle wish, since it cannot be altered; others would have an explanation of the past—idler still, since it cannot be recalled—I heard their queries with scorn, and demanded the means of avenging myself of a deadly enemy, for I grow old, and may trust no longer to Bilboa blade. She gave me a packet—Mix

that, said she, with any liquid, and thy vengeance is complete."

"Villain! and you mixed it with the food of this imprisoned lady, to the dishonour of thy master's house?"

"To redeem the insulted honour of my master's house, I mixed the contents of the packet with the jar of succory-water; they seldom fail to drain it, and the woman loves it over all."

"It was a work of hell," said the Lady Lochleven, "both the asking and the granting.—Away, wretched man, let us see if aid be yet too late!"

"They will not admit us, madam, save we enter by force—I have been twice at the door, but can obtain no entrance."

"We will beat it level with the ground, if needful—And, hold—summon Randal hither instantly.—Randal, here is a foul and evil chance befallen—send off a boat instantly to Kinross, the Chamberlain Luke Lundin is said to have skill—Fetch off, too,

that foul witch Nicneven; she shall first counteract her own spell, and then be burned to ashes in the island of Saint Serf. Away, away—Tell them to hoist sail and ply oar, as ever they would have good of the Douglas's hand."

"Mother Nicneven will not be lightly found or fetched hither on these conditions," answered Dryfesdale.

"Then grant her full assurance of safety—Look to it, for thine own life must answer for this lady's recovery."

"I might have guessed that," said Dryfesdale sullenly; "but it is my comfort I have avenged mine own cause, as well as yours. She hath scoffed and scripped at me, and encouraged her saucy minion of a page to ridicule my stiff gait and slow speech. I felt it borne in upon me that I was to be avenged on them."

"Go to the western turret," said the Lady, "and remain there in ward until we see how this gear will terminate. I know

thy resolved disposition—thou wilt not attempt escape."

"Not were the walls of the turret of egg-shells, and the lake sheeted with ice," said Dryfesdale. "I am well taught, and strong in belief that man does nought of himself; he is but the foam on the billow, which rises, bubbles, and bursts, not by its own effort, but by the mightier impulse of fate, which urges him. Yet, lady, if I may advise, amid this zeal for the life of the Jezabel of Scotland, forget not what is du to thine own honour, and keep the matter secret as you may."

So saying, the gloomy fatalist turned from her, and stalked off with sullen composure to the place of confinement allotted to him.

His lady caught at his last hint, and only expressed her fear that the prisoner had partaken of some unwholesome food, and was dangerously ill. The castle was soon alarmed and in confusion. Randal was dispatched to the shore to fetch off Lundin,

with such remedies as could counteract poison; and with farther instructions to bring Mother Nicneven, if she could be found, with full power to pledge the Lady of Lochleven's word for her safety.

Meanwhile the Lady of Lochleven herself held parley at the door of the Queen's apartment, and in vain urged the page to undo it.

"Foolish boy!" she said, "thine own life and thy Lady's are at stake—Open, I say, or we will cause the door to be broken down."

"I may not open the door without my Royal Mistress's orders," answered Roland; "she has been very ill, and now she slumbers—if you wake her by using violence, let the consequence be on you and your followers."

"Was ever woman in a strait so fearful?" said the Lady of Lochleven—"At least, thou rash boy, beware that no one tastes the food, but especially the jar of succory-water."

She then hastened to the turret, where Dryfesdale had composedly resigned himself to imprisonment. She found him reading, and demanded of him, "Was thy fell potion of speedy operation?"

"Slow!" answered the steward. "The hag asked me which I chose—I told her I loved a slow and sure revenge. Revenge, said I, is the highest-flavoured draught which man tastes upon earth, and he should sip it by little and little—not drain it up greedily at once."

"Against whom, unhappy man, couldst thou nourish so fell a revenge?"

"I had many objects, but the chief was that insolent page."

"The boy!—thou inhuman man," exclaimed the lady; "what could he do to deserve thy malice?"

"He rose in your favour, and you graced him with your commissions—that was one thing. He rose in that of George Douglas's also—that was another. He was the

favourite of the Calvinistic Henderson, who hated me because my spirit disowns a separated priesthood. The Moabitish Queen held him dear—winds from each opposing point blew in his favour—the old servitor of your house was held lightly among ye—above all, from the first time I saw his face, I longed to destroy him."

"What fiend have I nurtured in my house?" replied the Lady. "May God forgive me the sin of having given thee food and raiment!"

"You might not chuse, lady," answered the steward. "Long ere this castle was builded—ay, long ere the islet which sustains it reared its head above the blue water, I was destined to be your faithful slave, and you to be my ungrateful mistress. Remember you not when I plunged amid the victorious French, in the time of this lady's mother, and brought off your husband, when those who had hung at the same breasts with him dared not attempt the rescue?—

Remember how I plunged into the lake when your grandson's skiff was overtaken by the tempest, boarded, and steered her safe to the land. Lady—the servant of a Scottish baron is he who regards not his own life, or that of any other, save his master. And, for the death of the woman, I had tried the potion on her sooner, had not Master George been her taster. Her death—would it not be the happiest news that Scotland ever heard? Is she not of the bloody Guisian stock, whose sword was so often red with the blood of God's saints? Is she not the daughter of the wretched tyrant James, whom heaven cast down from his kingdom, and his pride, even as the king of Babylon was smitten?"

"Peace, villain!" said the lady—a thousand varied recollections thronging on her mind at the mention of her royal lover's name; "Peace, and disturb not the ashes of the dead—of the royal, of the unhappy dead. Read thy Bible; and may God grant thee to avail thyself better of its contents

than thou hast yet done." She departed hastily, and as she reached the next apartment, the tears rose to her eyes so hastily, that she was compelled to stop and use her kerchief to dry them. "I expected not this," she said, "no more than to have drawn water from the dry flint, or sap from a withered tree. I saw with a dry eye the apostacy and shame of George Douglas, the hope of my son's house—the child of my love; and yet I now weep for him who has so long lain in his grave—for him to whom I owe it, that his daughter can make a scoffing and a jest of my name! But she is *his* daughter—my heart, hardened against her for so many causes, relents when a glance of her eye places her father unexpectedly before me—and as often her likeness to that true daughter of the house of Guise, her detested mother, has again confirmed my resolution. But she must not—must not die in my house, and by so foul a practice. Thank God, the operation of the potion is slow, and may be counteracted. I will to her

apartment once more. But O! that hardened villain, whose fidelity we held in such esteem, and had such high proof of! What miracle can unite so much wickedness, and so much truth, in one bosom!"

The Lady of Lochleven was not aware how far minds of a certain gloomy and determined cast by nature, may be warped by a keen sense of petty injuries and insults, combining with the love of gain, and sense of self-interest, and amalgamated with the crude, wild, and undigested fanatical opinions which this man had gathered among the crazy sectaries of Germany; or how far the doctrines of fatalism, which he had embraced so decidedly, sear the human conscience, by representing our actions as the result of inevitable necessity.

During her visit to the prisoner, Roland had communicated to Catherine the tenor of the conversation he had had with her at the door of the apartment. The quick intelligence of that lively maiden instantly comprehended the outline of what was be-

lieved to have happened, but her prejudices hurried her beyond the truth.

"They meant to have poisoned us," she exclaimed in horror, "and there stands the fatal liquor which should have done the deed!—ay, as soon as Douglas ceased to be our taster, our food was like to be fatally seasoned. Thou, Roland, who shouldst have made the essay, wert readily doomed to die with us. O, dearest Lady Fleming, pardon, pardon, for the injuries I said to you in my anger—your words were prompted by heaven to save our lives, and especially that of the injured Queen. But what have we now to do? that old crocodile of the lake will be presently back to shed her hypocritical tears over our dying agonies.—Lady Fleming, what shall we do?"

"Our Lady help us in our need!" she replied; "how should I tell—unless we were to make our plaint to the Regent."

"Make our plaint to the devil," said Catherine, impatiently, "and accuse his dam at the foot of his burning throne!—the Queen

still sleeps—we must gain time. The poisoning hag must not know her scheme has miscarried; the old envenomed spider has but too many ways of mending her broken web.—The jar of succory water," said she—"Roland, if thou be'st a man, help me—empty the jar on the chimney or from the window—make such waste among the viands as if we had made our usual meal, and leave the fragments on cup and porringer, but taste nothing as thou lovest thy life. I will sit by the Queen, and tell her at her waking, in what a fearful pass we stand. Her sharp wit and ready spirit will teach us what is best to be done. Meanwhile, till farther notice, observe, Roland, that the Queen is in a state of torpor—that Lady Fleming is indisposed—that character, (speaking in a lower tone) will suit her best, and save her wits some labour in vain. I am not so much indisposed, thou understandest."

"And I?" said the page——

"You?" replied Catherine, "you are quite well—who thinks it worth while to poison puppy-dogs or pages?"

"Does this levity become the time?" said the page.

"It does, it does," answered Catherine Seyton; "if the Queen approves, I see plainly how this disconcerted attempt may do us good service."

She went to work while she spoke, eagerly assisted by Roland. The breakfast-table soon displayed the appearance as if the ladies had eaten their meal as usual, and the ladies retired as softly as possible into the Queen's sleeping apartment. At a new summons of the Lady Lochleven, the page undid the door and admitted her into the anti-room, asking her pardon for having withstood her, alleging in excuse, that the Queen had fallen into a heavy slumber since she had broken her fast.

"She has eaten and drunken then?" said the Lady of Lochleven.

"Surely," replied the page, "according to her Grace's ordinary custom, unless upon the fasts of the church."

"The jar," she said, hastily examining it, "it is empty—drank the Lady Mary the whole of this water?"

"A large part, madam; and I heard the Lady Catherine Seyton jestingly upbraid the Lady Mary Fleming with having taken more than a just share of what remained, so that but little fell to her own lot."

"And are they well in health?" said the Lady of Lochleven.

"Lady Fleming," said the page, "complains of lethargy, and looks duller than usual; and the Lady Catherine of Seyton feels her head somewhat more giddy than is her wont."

He raised his voice a little as he said these words, to apprize the ladies of the part assigned to each of them, and not, perhaps, without the wish of conveying to the ears of Catherine the page-like jest which lurked in the allotment.

"I will enter the Queen's chamber," said the Lady Lochleven, "my business is express."

As she advanced to the door, the voice of Catherine Seyton was heard from within —"No one can enter here—the Queen sleeps."

"I will not be controuled, young lady," replied the Lady of Lochleven; "there is, I wot, no inner bar, and I will enter in your despite."

"There is, indeed, no inner bar," answered Catherine firmly, "but there are the staples where that bar should be; and into those staples have I thrust mine arm, like an ancestress of your own, when, better employed than the Douglasses of our days, she thus defended the bed-chamber of her sovereign against murderers. Try your force, then, and see whether a Seyton cannot rival in courage a maiden of the house of Douglas."

"I dare not attempt the pass at such risk," said the Lady of Lochleven; "strange,

that this Princess, with all that justly attaches to her as blameworthy, should preserve such empire over the minds of her attendants.—Damsel, I give thee my honour that I come for the Queen's safety and advantage. Awaken her, if thou lovest her, and pray her leave that I may enter—I will retire from the door the whilst."

"Thou wilt not awaken the Queen?" said the Lady Fleming.

"What choice have we?" said the ready-witted maiden, "unless you deem it better to wait till the Lady Lochleven herself plays lady of the bed-chamber. Her fit of patience will not last long, and the Queen must be prepared to meet her."

"But thou wilt bring back her Grace's fit by thus disturbing her."

"Heaven forbid!" replied Catherine; "but if so, it must pass for an effect of the poison. I hope better things, and that the Queen will be able when she wakes to form her own judgment in this terrible crisis. Meanwhile, do thou, dear Lady Fleming,

practise to look as dull and heavy as the alertness of thy spirit will permit."

Catherine kneeled by the side of the Queen's bed, and kissing her hand repeatedly, succeeded at last in awakening without alarming her. She seemed surprised to find that she was ready dressed, but sate up in her bed, and appeared so perfectly composed, that Catherine Seyton, without farther preamble, judged it safe to inform her of the predicament in which they were placed. Mary turned pale, and crossed herself again and again, when she heard the imminent danger in which she had stood. But, like the Ulysses of Homer,

> ————Hardly waking yet,
> Sprung in her mind the momentary wit,

and she at once understood her situation, with the dangers and advantages that attended it.

"We cannot do better," she said, after her hasty conference with Catherine, press-

ing her at the same time to her bosom, and kissing her forehead ; " we cannot do better than to follow the scheme so happily devised by thy quick wit and bold affection. Undo the door to the Lady Lochleven—She shall meet her match in art, though not in perfidy. Fleming, draw close the curtain, and get thee behind it—thou art a better tire-woman than an actress ; but do but breathe heavily, and, if thou wilt, groan slightly, and it will top thy part. Hark! they come. Now, Catherine of Medicis, may thy spirit inspire me, for a cold northern brain is too blunt for this scene!"

Ushered by Catherine Seyton, and stepping as light as she could, the Lady Lochleven was ushered into the twilight apartment, and conducted to the side of the couch, where Mary, pallid and exhausted from a sleepless night, and the subsequent agitation of the morning, lay extended so listlessly as might well confirm the worst fears of her hostess.

"Now, God forgive us our sins!" said the Lady of Lochleven, forgetting her pride, and throwing herself on her knees by the side of the bed; "it is too true—she is murdered."

"Who is in the chamber?" said Mary, as if awaking from a heavy sleep; "Seyton, Fleming, where are you? I heard a strange voice. Who waits?—Call Courselles."

"Alas! her memory is at Holyrood, though her body is at Lochleven.—Forgive, madam," continued the lady, "if I call your attention to me—I am Margaret Erskine, of the house of Mar, by marriage Lady Douglas of Lochleven."

"O, our gentle hostess," answered the Queen, "who hath such care of our lodgings and of our diet—We cumber you too much and too long, good Lady of Lochleven; but we now trust your task of hospitality is well nigh ended."

"Her words go like a knife through my heart," said the Lady of Lochleven—"With

a breaking heart, I pray your Grace to tell me what is your ailment, that aid may be had if there be yet time?"

"Nay, my ailment," replied the Queen, "is nothing—nothing worth telling, or worth a leech's notice—my limbs feel heavy—my heart feels cold—a prisoner's limbs and heart are rarely otherwise—fresh air, methinks, and freedom, would soon revive me; but, as the Estates have ordered it, death alone can break my prison-doors."

"Were it possible, madam," said the Lady, "that your liberty could restore your perfect health, I would myself encounter the resentment of the Regent—of my son, Sir William—of my whole friends, rather than you should meet your fate in this castle."

"Alas! madam," said the Lady Fleming, who conceived the time propitious to shew that her own address had been held too lightly of; "it is but trying what good freedom may work upon us; for myself, I think

a free walk on the greensward would do me much good at heart."

The Lady of Lochleven rose from the bed-side, and darted a penetrating look at the elder valetudinary. "Are you so evil-disposed, Lady Fleming?"

"Evil-disposed indeed, madam," replied the court dame, "and more especially since breakfast."

"Help! help!" exclaimed Catherine, anxious to break off a conversation which boded her schemes no good; "Help! I say, help! the Queen is about to pass away. Aid her, Lady Lochleven, if you be a woman."

The lady hastened to support the Queen's head, who, turning her eyes towards her with an air of great languor, exclaimed, "Thanks, my dearest Lady of Lochleven—notwithstanding some passages of late, I have never misconstrued or misdoubted your affection to our house. It was proved, as I have heard, before I was born."

The Lady Lochleven sprung from the floor on which she had again knelt, and having paced the apartment in great disorder, flung open the lattice, as if to get air.

"Now, Our Lady forgive me!" said Catherine to herself. "How deep must the love of sarcasm be implanted in the breasts of us women, since the Queen, with all her sense, will risk ruin rather than rein in her wit." She then adventured, stooping over the Queen's person, to press her arm with her hand, saying at the same time, "For God's sake, madam, restrain yourself."

"Thou art too forward, maiden," said the Queen; but immediately added, in a low whisper, "Forgive me, Catherine: but when I felt the hag's murtherous hands busy about my head and neck, I felt such disgust and hatred, that I must have said something, or died. But I will be schooled to better haviour—only see that thou let her not touch me."

"Now, God be praised!" said the Lady

Lochleven, withdrawing her head from the window, "the boat comes as fast as sail and oar can send wood through water—It brings the leech and a female—certainly, from the appearance, the very person I was in quest of. Were she but well out of this castle, with our honour safe, I would that she were on the top of the wildest mountain in Norway, or I would I had been there myself, ere I had undertaken this trust."

While she thus expressed herself, standing apart at one window, Roland Græme, from the other, watched the boat bursting through the waters of the lake, which glided from its side in ripple and in foam. He, too, became sensible, that at the stern was seated the medical Chamberlain, clad in his black velvet cloak; and that his own relative, Magdalen Græme, in her assumed character of Mother Nicneven, stood in the bow, her hands clasped together, and pointed towards the castle, and her attitude, even at that distance, expressing enthusiastic eagerness to arrive at the landing-place. They

arrived there accordingly; and while the supposed witch was detained in a room beneath, the physician was ushered to the Queen's apartment, which he entered with all due professional solemnity. Catherine had, in the meanwhile, fallen back from the Queen's bed, and taken an opportunity to whisper to Roland, "Methinks, from the information of the thread-bare velvet cloak and the solemn beard, there would be little trouble in haltering yonder ass. But thy grandmother, Roland—thy grandmother's zeal will ruin us, if she get not a hint to dissemble."

Roland, without reply, glided toward the door of the apartment, crossed the parlour, and safely entered the anti-chamber; but when he attempted to pass farther, the word "Back! Back!" echoed from one to the other, by two men armed with carabines, convinced him that the Lady of Lochleven's suspicions had not, even in the midst of her alarms, been so far lulled to sleep as to omit the precaution of stationing centinels on

her prisoners. He was compelled, therefore, to return to the parlour, or audience-chamber, in which he found the lady of the castle in conference with her learned leech.

"A truce with your cant phrase and your solemn foppery, Lundin," in such terms she accosted the man of art, "and let me know instantly, if thou canst tell whether this lady hath swallowed aught that is less than wholesome."

"Nay, but, good lady—honoured patroness—to whom I am alike bondsman in my medical and official capacity, deal reasonably with me. If this, mine illustrious patient, will not answer a question, saving with sighs and moans—if that other honourable lady will do nought but yawn in my face when I enquire after the diagnostics—and if that other young damsel, who I profess is a comely maiden"——

"Talk not to me of comeliness or of damsels," said the Lady of Lochleven, "I say, are they evil-disposed?—In one word, man, have they taken poison, ay or no?"

"Poisons, madam," said the learned leech, "are of various sorts. There is your animal poison, as the *lepus marinus*, as mentioned by Dioscorides and Galen—there are mineral and semi-mineral poisons, as those compounded of sublimate regulus of antimony, vitriol, and the arsenical salts—there are your poisons from herbs and vegetables, as the aqua cymbalariæ, opium, aconitum, cantharides, and the like—there are also"——

"Now, out upon thee for a learned fool! and I myself am no better for expecting an oracle from such a log," said the lady.

"Nay, but if your ladyship will have patience—if I knew what food they have partaken of, or could see but the remnants of what they have last eaten—for as to the external and internal symptoms, I can discover nought like; for, as Galen saith in his second book *de Antidotes*"——

"Away, fool!" said the lady; "send me that hag hither; she shall avouch what it was that she hath given to the wretch

Dryfesdale, or the pilniewinks and thumbikins shall wrench it out of her finger-joints."

"Art hath no enemy unless the ignorant," said the mortified Doctor; veiling, however, his remark under the Latin version, and stepping apart into a corner to watch the result.

In a minute or two, Magdalen Græme entered the apartment, dressed as we have described her at the revel, but with her muffler thrown back, and all affectation of disguise. She was attended by two guards, of whose presence she did not seem even to be conscious, and who followed her with an air of embarrassment and timidity, which was probably owing to their belief in her supernatural power, coupled with the effect produced by her bold and undaunted demeanour. She confronted the Lady of Lochleven, who seemed to endure with high disdain the confidence of her look and manner.

"Wretched woman!" said the Lady, after

essaying for a moment to bear her down, before she addressed her, by the stately severity of her look, "what was that powder which thou didst give to a servant of this house, by name Robert Dryfesdale, that he might work out with it some slow and secret vengeance?—Confess its nature and properties, or, by the honour of Douglas, I give thee to fire and stake before the sun is lower!"

"Alas!" said Magdalen Græme in reply, "and when became a Douglas or a Douglas's man so unfurnished of his means of revenge, that he should seek them at the hands of a poor and solitary woman? The towers in which your captives pine away into unpitied graves, yet stand fast on the foundation—the crimes wrought in them have not yet burst their vaults asunder—your men have still their cross-bows, pistolets, and daggers—why need you seek to herbs or charms for the execution of your revenges?"

"Hear me, foul hag," said the Lady of Lochleven,—"but what avails speaking to

thee?—Bring Dryfesdale hither, and let them be confronted together."

"You may spare your retainers the labour," replied Magdalen Græme. "I came not here to be confronted with a base groom, nor to answer the interrogatories of James's heretical leman—I came to speak with the Queen of Scotland—Give place there!"

And while the Lady of Lochleven stood confounded at her boldness, and at the reproach she had cast upon her, Magdalen Græme strode past her into the bed-chamber of the Queen, and kneeling on the floor, made a salutation as if, in the Oriental fashion, she meant to touch the earth with her forehead.

"Hail, Princess!" she said, "hail daughter of many a king, but graced above them all in that thou art called to suffer for the true faith!—hail to thee, the pure gold of whose crown has been tried in the seven-times heated furnace of affliction—hear the comfort which God and Our Lady send

thee by the mouth of thy unworthy servant.—But first," and stooping her head she crossed herself repeatedly, and, still upon her knees, appeared to be rapidly reciting some formula of devotion.

"Seize her and drag her to the Massymore!—To the deepest dungeon with the sorceress, whose master, the Devil, could alone have inspired her with boldness enough to insult the mother of Douglas in his own castle."

Thus spoke the incensed Lady of Lochleven, but the physician presumed to interpose.

"I pray of you, honoured madam, she be permitted to take her course without interruption. Peradventure, we shall learn something concerning the nostrum she hath ventured, contrary to law and the rules of art, to adhibit to these ladies, through the medium of the steward Dryfesdale."

"For a fool," replied the Lady of Lochleven, "thou hast counselled wisely—I

will bridle my resentment till their conference be over."

"God forbid, honoured lady," said Doctor Lundin, "that you should suppress it longer—nothing may more endanger the frame of your honoured body; and truly, if there be witchcraft in this matter, it is held by the vulgar, and even by solid authors on Dæmonology, that three scruples of the ashes of the witch, when she hath been well and carefully burned at a stake, is a grand Catholicon in such matter, even as they prescribe *crinis canis rabidi*, a hair of the dog that bit the patient, in cases of hydrophobia. I warrant neither treatment, being out of the regular practice of the schools; but in the present case, there can be little harm in trying the conclusion upon this old necromancer and quack-salver—*fiat experimentum* (as we say) *in corpore vili*."

"Peace, fool!" said the Lady, "she is about to speak."

At that moment Magdalen Græme arose from her knees, and turned her countenance

on the Queen, at the same time advancing her foot, extending her arm, and assuming the mien and attitude of a Sybil in frenzy. As her grey hair floated back from under her coif, and her eye gleamed fire from under its shaggy eye-brow, the effect of her expressive, though emaciated features, was heightened by an enthusiasm approaching to insanity, and her appearance struck with awe all who were present. Her eyes for a time glanced wildly around, as if seeking for something to aid her in collecting her powers of expression, and her lips had a nervous and quivering motion, as those of one who would fain speak, yet rejects as inadequate the words which present themselves. Mary herself caught the infection, as if by a sort of magnetic influence, and raising herself from her bed, without being able to withdraw her eyes from those of Magdalen, waited as if for the oracle of a Pythoness. She waited not long; for no sooner had the enthusiast collected herself, than her gaze became intensely steady, her features

assumed a determined energy, and no sooner did she begin to speak, than the words flowed from her with a profuse fluency, which might have passed for inspiration, and which, perhaps, she herself mistook for such.

"Arise," she said, "Queen of France and of England! Arise, lioness of Scotland, and be not dismayed, though the nets of the hunters have encircled thee! Stoop not to feign with the false ones, whom thou shalt soon meet in the field. The issue of battle is with the god of armies, but by battle thy cause shall be tried. Lay aside, then, the arts of lower mortals, and assume those which become a Queen! True defender of the only true faith, the armoury of heaven is open to thee! Faithful daughter of the Church, take the keys of St Peter, to bind and to loose!—Royal Princess of the land, take the sword of Saint Paul, to smite and to shear! There is darkness in thy destiny;—but not in these towers, not under the rule of their haughty mistress, shall that destiny be closed—In other lands the lioness may

crouch to the power of the tigress, but not in her own—not in Scotland shall the Queen of Scotland long remain captive—nor is the fate of the royal Stuart in the hands of the traitor Douglas. Let the Lady of Lochleven double her bolts and deepen her dungeons, they shall not retain thee—each element shall give thee its assistance ere thou shalt continue captive—the land shall lend its earthquakes, the water its waves, the air its tempests, the fire its devouring flames, to desolate this house, rather than it shall continue the place of thy captivity.—Hear this and tremble, all ye who fight against the light, for she says it, to whom it hath been assured!"

She was silent, and the astonished physician said, "If there was ever an *Energumene*, or possessed Demoniac, in our days, there is a devil speaking with that woman's tongue."

"Practice," said the Lady of Lochleven, recovering her surprise; "here is all prac-

tice and imposture—To the dungeon with her!"

"Lady of Lochleven," said Mary, arising from her bed, and coming forward with her wonted dignity, "ere you make arrest on any one in our presence, hear me but one word. I have done you some wrong—I believed you privy to the murderous purpose of your vassal, and I deceived you in suffering you to believe it had taken effect. I did you wrong, Lady of Lochleven, for I perceive your purpose to aid me was sincere. We tasted not of the liquid, nor are we now sick, save that we languish for our freedom."

"It is avowed like Mary of Scotland," said Magdalen Græme; "and know, besides, that had the Queen drained the draught to the dregs, it was harmless as the water from a sainted spring. Trow ye, proud woman," she added, addressing herself to the Lady of Lochleven, "that I—I—would have been the wretch to put poi-

son in the hands of a servant or vassal of the House of Lochleven, knowing whom that house contained? as soon would I have furnished drug to slay my own daughter."

"Am I thus bearded in mine own castle," said the Lady; "to the dungeon with her! —she shall abye what is due to the vender of poisons and practiser of witchcrafts."

"Yet hear me for an instant, Lady of Lochleven," said Mary; "and do you," to Magdalen, "be silent at my command.— Your steward, lady, has by confession attempted my life, and those of my household, and this woman hath done her best to save them, by furnishing him with what was harmless, in place of the fatal drugs which he expected. Methinks I propose to you but a fair exchange, when I say I forgive your vassal with all my heart, and leave vengeance to God, and to his conscience, so that you also forgive the boldness of this woman in your presence; for we trust you do not hold it as a crime, that she substi-

tuted an innocent beverage for the mortal poison which was to have drenched our cup."

"Heaven forefend, madam," said the Lady, "that I should account that a crime which saved the house of Douglas from a foul breach of honour and hospitality! We have written to our son touching our vassal's delict, and he must abide his doom, which will most likely be death. Touching this woman, her trade is damnable by Scripture, and is mortally punished by the wise laws of our ancestry—she also must abide her doom."

"And have I then," said the Queen, "no claim on the house of Lochleven for the wrong I have so nearly suffered within their walls? I ask but in requital, the life of a frail and aged woman, whose brain, as yourself may judge, seems somewhat affected by years and suffering."

"If the Lady Mary," replied the inflexible Lady of Lochleven, "hath been mena-

ced with wrong in the house of Douglas, it may be regarded as some compensation, that her complots have cost that house the exile of a valued son."

"Plead no more for me, my gracious Sovereign," said Magdalen Græme, "nor abase yourself to ask so much as a grey hair of my head at her hands. I knew the risk at which I served my Church and my Queen, and was ever prompt to pay my poor life as the ransom. It is a comfort to think, that in slaying me, or in restraining my freedom, or even in injuring that single grey hair, the house, whose honour she boasts so highly, will have filled up the measure of their shame by the breach of their solemn written assurance of safety."—And taking from her bosom a paper, she handed it to the Queen.

"It is a solemn assurance of safety in life and limb," said Queen Mary, "with space to come and to go, under the hand and seal of the Chamberlain of Kinross,

granted to Magdalen Græme, commonly called Mother Nicneven, in consideration of her consenting to put herself, for the space of twenty-four hours, if required, within the iron gate of the Castle of Lochleven."

"Knave!" said the lady, turning to the Chamberlain, "how dared you grant her such a protection?"

"It was by your ladyship's orders, transmitted by Randal, as he can bear witness," replied Doctor Lundin; "nay, I am only like the pharmacopolist, who compounds the drugs after the order of the mediciner."

"I remember—I remember," answered the Lady; "but I meant the assurance only to be used in case, by residing in another jurisdiction, she could not have been apprehended under our warrant."

"Nevertheless," said the Queen, "the Lady of Lochleven is bound by the action of her deputy in granting the assurance."

"Madam," replied the Lady, "the house

of Douglas have never broken their safe-conduct and never will do—too deeply did they suffer by such a breach of trust, exercised on themselves when your Grace's ancestor, the second James, in defiance of the rights of hospitality, and of his own written assurance of safety, poniarded the brave Earl of Douglas with his own hand, and within two yards of the social board, at which he had just before sat the King of Scotland's honoured guest."

"Methinks," said the Queen, carelessly, "in consideration of so very recent and enormous a tragedy, which I think only chanced some six score years agone, the Douglasses should have shewn themselves less tenacious of the company of their sovereigns, than you, Lady of Lochleven, seem to be of mine."

"Let Randal," said the Lady, "take the hag back to Kinross, and set her at full liberty, discharging her from our bounds in future, on peril of her head.—And let your wisdom," to the Chamberlain, "keep her com-

pany. And fear not for your character, though I send you in such company; for, granting her to be a witch, it would be a waste of faggots to burn you for a wizard."

The crest-fallen Chamberlain was preparing to depart; but Magdalen Græme, collecting herself, was about to reply, when the Queen interposed, saying, "Good mother, we heartily thank you for your unfeigned zeal towards our person, and pray you, as our liege-woman, that you abstain from whatever may lead you into personal danger; and, further, it is our will that you depart without a word of farther parley with any one in this castle. For thy present guerdon, take this small reliquary—it was given to us by our uncle the Cardinal, and hath had the benediction of the Holy Father himself—and now depart in peace and in silence.—For you, learned sir," continued the Queen, advancing to the doctor, who made his reverence in a manner doubly embarrassed by the awe of the Queen's presence, which made him fear to do too little, and by the

apprehension of his lady's displeasure, in case he should chance to do too much; "for you, learned sir, as it was not your fault, though surely our own good fortune, that we did not need your skill at this time, it would not become us, however circumstanced, to suffer our leech to leave us without such guerdon as we can offer."

With these words, and with the grace which never forsook her, though, in the present case, there might lurk under it a little gentle ridicule, she offered a small embroidered purse to the Chamberlain, who, with extended hand and arched back, his learned face stooping until a physiognomist might have practised the metoscopical science upon it, as seen from behind betwixt his gambadoes, was about to accept of the professional recompence, offered by so fair as well as illustrious an hand. But the Lady interposed, and, regarding the Chamberlain, said aloud, "No servant of our house, without instantly relinquishing

that character, and incurring withal our highest displeasure, shall dare receive any gratuity at the hand of the Lady Mary."

Sadly and slowly the Chamberlain raised his depressed stature into the perpendicular attitude, and left the apartment dejectedly, followed by Magdalen Græme, after, with mute but expressive gesture, she had kissed the reliquary with which the Queen had presented her, and raising her clasped hands and uplifted eyes towards Heaven, had seemed to entreat a benediction upon the royal dame. As she left the castle and went towards the quay where the boat lay, Roland Græme, anxious to communicate with her if possible, threw himself in her way, and might have succeeded in exchanging a few words with her, as she was guarded only by the dejected Chamberlain and his halberdiers; but she seemed to have taken, in its most strict and literal acceptation, the command to be silent, which she had received from the Queen, for, to

the repeated signs of her grandson, she only replied by laying her finger on her lip. Dr Lundin was not so reserved. Regret for the handsome gratuity, and for the compulsory task of self-denial imposed on him, had grieved the spirit of that worthy officer and learned mediciner—"Even thus, my friend," said he, squeezing the page's hand as he bade him farewell, "is merit rewarded. I came to cure this unhappy lady—and I profess she well deserves the trouble, for say what they will of her, she hath a most winning manner, a sweet voice, a gracious smile, and a most majestic wave of her hand. If she was not poisoned, say, my dear Master Roland, was that fault of mine, I being ready to cure her if she had?—and now I am denied the permission to accept my well-earned honorarium—O Galen! O Hippocrates! is the graduate's cap and doctor's scarlet brought to this pass! *Frustra fatigamus remediis ægros.*"

He wiped his eyes, stepped on the gunwale, and the boat pushed off from the shore, and went merrily across the lake, which was dimpled by the summer wind.

CHAPTER VI.

Death distant?—No, alas! he's ever with us,
And shakes the dart at us in all our actings:
He lurks within our cup, while we're in health;
Sits by our sick-bed, mocks our medicines;
We cannot walk, or sit, or ride, or travel,
But Death is bye to seize us when he lists.

The Spanish Father

FROM the agitating scene in the Queen's presence-chamber, the Lady of Lochleven retreated to her own apartment, and ordered the steward to be called before her.

"Have they not disarmed thee, Dryfesdale?" she said, on seeing him enter accoutered, as usual, with sword and dagger.

"No!" replied the old man; "how should they?—Your ladyship, when you commanded me to ward, said nought of laying down my arms; and, I think, none of your

menials, without your order, or your son's, dare approach Jasper Dryfesdale for such a purpose. Shall I now give up my sword to you?—it is worth little now, for it has fought for your house till it is worn down to cold iron, like the pantler's old chipping knife."

"You have attempted a deadly crime—poison under trust."

"Under trust!—hem.—I know not what your ladyship thinks of it, but the world without thinks the trust was given you even for that very end; and you would have been well off had it been so ended, as I proposed, and you neither the worse nor the wiser."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the Lady, "and fool as villain, who could not even execute the crime he had planned!"

"I bid as fair for it as man could," replied Dryfesdale; "I went to a woman—a witch and a papist—If I found not poison, it was because it was otherwise predestined. I tried fair for it; but the half-done job may be clouted, if you will."

"Villain! I am even now about to send off an express messenger to my son, to take order how thou shouldst be disposed of. Prepare thyself for death, if thou canst."

"He that looks on death, lady," answered Dryfesdale, "as that which he may not shun, and which has its own fixed and certain hour, is ever prepared for it. He that is hanged in May will eat no flaunes in Midsummer—so there is the moan made for the old serving-man. But whom, pray I, send you on so fair an errand?"

"There will be no lack of messengers," answered his mistress.

"By my hand, but there will," replied the old man; "your castle is but poorly manned, considering the watches that you must keep, having this charge—There is the warder, and two others, whom you discarded for tampering with Master George; then for the warder's tower, the baillie, the donjon—five men mount each guard, and the rest must sleep for the most part in their clothes. To send away another man, were

to harass the centinels to death—unthrifty misuse for a household. To take in new soldiers were dangerous, the charge requiring tried men. I see but one thing for it—I will do your errand to Sir William Douglas myself."

"That were indeed a resource!—And on what day within twenty years would it be done?" said the Lady.

"Even with the speed of man and horse," said Dryfesdale; "for though I care not much about the latter days of an old serving man's life, yet I would like to know as soon as may be whether my neck is mine own, or the hangman's."

"Holdest thou thy own life so lightly?" said the Lady.

"Else I had recked more of that of others," said the predestinarian—"What is death?—it is but ceasing to live—And what is living?—a weary return of light and darkness, sleeping and waking, being hungered and eating. Your dead man needs neither candle nor cann, neither fire nor

feather-bed; and the joiner's chest serves him for an eternal freize-jerkin."

"Wretched man! believest thou not that after the death comes the judgment?"

"Lady," answered Dryfesdale, "as my mistress, I may not dispute your words; but, as spiritually speaking, you are still but a burner of bricks in Egypt, ignorant of the freedom of the saints; for, as was well shewn to me by that gifted man, Nicolaus Schœfferbach, who was martyred by the bloody Bishop of Munster, he cannot sin who doth but execute that which is predestined, since"——

"Silence!" said the Lady, interrupting him—"Answer me not with thy bold and presumptuous blasphemy, but hear me—Thou hast been long the servant of our house"——

"The born-servant of the Douglas—they have had the best of me—I served them since I left Lockerbie: I was then ten years old, and you may soon add the threescore to it."

"Thy foul attempt has miscarried, so thou art guilty only in intention. It were a deserved deed to hang thee on the warder's tower; and yet, in thy present mind, it were but giving a soul to Satan. I take thine offer, then—Go hence—here is my packet—I will add to it but a line, to desire him to send me a faithful servant or two to complete the garrison. Let my son deal with you as he will. If thou art wise, thou wilt make for Lockerbie so soon as thy foot touches dry land, and let the packet find another bearer; at all rates, look it miscarries not."

"Nay, madam," replied he—"I was born, as I said, the Douglasses' servant, and I will be no corbie-messenger in mine old age—your message to your son shall be done as truly by me as if it concerned another man's neck. I take my leave of your honour."

The Lady issued her commands, and the old man was ferried over to the shore, to proceed in his extraordinary pilgrimage. It is necessary the reader should accompany

him on his journey, which Providence had determined should not be of long duration.

On arriving at the village, the steward, although his disgrace had transpired, was readily accommodated with a horse, by the Chamberlain's authority ; and the roads being by no means esteemed safe, he associated himself with Auchtermuchty, the common carrier, in order to travel in his company to Edinburgh.

The worthy waggoner, according to the established custom of all carriers, stage-coachmen, and other persons in such public authority, from the earliest days to the present, never wanted good reasons for stopping upon the road, as often and where-ever he would ; and the place which had most captivation for him as a resting-place was a change-house, as it was termed, not very distant from a romantic dell, well known by the name of Keirie Craigs. Attractions of a kind very different from those which arrested the progress of John Auchtermuchty and his wains, still continue to

hover round this romantic spot, and none has visited its vicinity without a desire to remain long and to return soon.

Arrived near his favourite *howff*, not all the authority of Dryfesdale (much diminished indeed by the rumours of his disgrace) could prevail on the carrier, obstinate as the brutes which he drove, to pass on without his accustomed halt, for which the distance he had travelled furnished little or no pretence. Old Keltie, the landlord, who has bestowed his name on a bridge in the neighbourhood of his quondam dwelling, received the carrier with his usual festive cordiality, and adjourned with him into the house, under pretence of important business, which, I believe, consisted in their emptying together a mutchkin stoup of usquebaugh. While the worthy host and his guest were thus employed, the discarded steward, with a double portion of moroseness in his gesture and look, walked discontentedly into the kitchen of the place, which was occupied but by one guest. The stran-

ger was a slight figure, scarce above the age of boyhood, and in the dress of a page, but bearing an air of haughty aristocratic boldness and even insolence in his look and manner, that might have made Dryfesdale conclude he had pretensions to superior rank, had not his experience taught him how frequently these airs of superiority were assumed by the domestics and military retainers of the Scottish nobility.—" The pilgrim's morning to you, old sir," said the youth; " you come, as I think, from Lochleven Castle—What news of our bonnie Queen?—a fairer dove was never pent up in so wretched a dove-cot."

" They that speak of Lochleven, and of those whom its walls contain,' answered Dryfesdale, " speak of what concerns the Douglas; and they who speak of what concerns the Douglas, do it at their peril."

" Do you speak from fear of them, old man, or would you make a quarrel for them? —I should have deemed your age might have cooled your blood."

"Never, while there are empty-pated coxcombs at each corner to keep it warm."

"The sight of thy grey hairs keeps mine cold," said the boy, who had risen up and now sat down again.

"It is well for thee, or I had cooled it with this holly-rod," replied the steward. "I think thou be'st one of those swash-bucklers, who brawl in ale-houses and taverns; and who, if words were pikes, and oaths were Andrew Ferraras, would soon place the religion of Babylon in the land once more, and the woman of Moab upon the throne."

"Now, by Saint Bennet of Seyton," said the youth, "I will strike thee on the face, thou foul-mouthed old railing heretic!"

"Saint Bennet of Seyton!" echoed the steward; "a proper warrant is Saint Bennet's, and for a proper nest of wolf-birds like the Seytons—I will arrest thee as a traitor to King James and the good Regent. ——Ho! John Auchtermuchty, raise aid against the King's traitor!"

So saying, he laid his hand on the youth's collar, and drew his sword. John Auchtermuchty looked in, but, seeing the naked weapon, ran faster out than he entered. Keltie, the landlord, stood by and helped neither party, only exclaiming, "Gentlemen! gentlemen! for the love of Heaven!" and so forth. A struggle ensued, in which the young man, chafed at Dryfesdale's boldness, and unable, with the ease he expected, to extricate himself from the old man's determined grasp, drew his dagger, and, with the speed of light, dealt him three wounds in the breast and body, the least of which was mortal. The old man sunk on the ground with a deep groan, and the host set up a piteous exclamation of surprise.

"Peace, ye bawling hound!" said the wounded steward; "are dagger-stabs and dying men such rarities in Scotland, that you should cry as if the house were falling? —Youth, I do not forgive thee, for there is nought betwixt us to forgive. Thou hast

done what I have done to more than one—And I suffer what I have seen them suffer—it was all ordained to be thus and not otherwise—But if thou wouldst do me right, thou wilt send this packet safely to the hands of Sir William of Douglas; and see that my memory suffer not, as if I would have loitered on mine errand for fear of my life."

The youth, whose passion had subsided the instant he had done the deed, listened with sympathy and attention, when another person, muffled in his cloak, entered the apartment, and exclaimed—"Good God! Dryfesdale, and expiring!"

"Ay, and Dryfesdale would that he had been dead," answered the wounded man, "rather than that his ears had heard the words of the only Douglas that ever was false—but yet it is better as it is. Good my murderer, and the rest of you, stand back a little, and let me speak with this unhappy apostate.—Kneel down by me, Master George—You have heard that I fail-

ed in my attempt, to take away that Moabitish stumbling-block and her retinue—I gave them that which I thought would have removed the temptation out of thy path—and this, though I had other reasons to shew to thy mother and others, I did chiefly purpose for the love of thee."

"For the love of me, base poisoner! Wouldst thou have committed so horrible, so unprovoked a murder, and mentioned my name with it?"

"And wherefore not, George of Douglas?" answered Dryfesdale. "Breath is now scarce with me, but I would spend my last gasp on this argument. Hast thou not, despite the honour thou owest to thy parents, the faith that is due to thy religion, the truth that is due to thy King, been so carried away by the charms of this beautiful sorceress, that thou wouldst have helped her to escape from her prison-house, and again to ascend the throne, which she had made a place of abomination?—Nay, stir not

from me—my hand, though fast stiffening, has yet force enough to hold thee.—What dost thou aim at?—to wed this witch of Scotland?—I warrant thee, thou mayst succeed—her heart and hand have been oft won at a cheaper rate, than thou, fool that thou art, would think thyself happy to pay. But, should a servant of thy father's house have seen thee embrace the fate of the idiot Darnley, or of the villain Bothwell—the fate of the murdered fool, or of the living pirate—while an ounce of rat's bane would have saved thee?"

"Think on God, Dryfesdale," said George Douglas, "and leave the utterance of those horrors—Repent if thou canst—if not, at least be silent.—Seyton, aid me to support this dying wretch, that he may compose himself to better thoughts, if it be possible."

"Seyton!" answered the dying man; "Seyton! Is it by a Seyton's hand that I fall at last?—there is something of retribution in that—since the house had nigh lost

a sister by my deed." Fixing his fading eyes on the youth, he added, "He hath her very features and presence!—Stoop down, youth, and let me see thee closer—I would know thee when we meet in yonder world, for homicides will herd together there, and I have been one." He pulled Seyton's face, in spite of some resistance, closer to his own, looked at him fixedly, and added, "Thou hast begun young—thy career will be the briefer—ay, thou wilt be met with, and that anon—a young plant never throve that was watered with an old man's blood.—Yet why blame I thee? Strange turns of fate," he muttered, ceasing to address Seyton, "I designed what I could not do, and he has done what he did not perchance design.—Wondrous, that our will should ever oppose itself to the strong and uncontroulable tide of destiny—that we should strive with the stream when we might drift with the current! My brain will serve me to question it no farther—I would Schœfferbach were here—yet why?—I am on a course which

the vessel can hold without a pilot.—Farewell, George of Douglas—I die true to thy father's house." He fell into convulsions at these words, and shortly after expired.

Seyton and Douglas stood looking on the dying man, and when the scene was closed, the former was the first to speak. "As I live, Douglas, I meant not this, and am sorry; but he laid hands on me, and compelled me to defend my freedom, as I best might, with my dagger. If he were ten times thy friend and follower, I can but say that I am sorry."

"I blame thee not, Seyton," said Douglas, "though I lament the chance—There is an over-ruling destiny above us, though not in the sense of that wretched man, who, beguiled by some foreign mystagogue, used the awful word as the ready apology for whatever he chose to do—we must examine the packet."

They withdrew into an inner room, and remained deep in consultation, until they were disturbed by the entrance of Keltie,

who, with an embarrassed countenance, asked Master George Douglas's pleasure respecting the disposal of the body. "Your honour knows," he added, "that I make my bread by living men, not by dead corpses; and old Mr Dryfesdale, who was but a sorry customer while he was alive, occupies my public room now that he is deceased, and can neither call for ale nor brandy."

"Tie a stone round his neck," said Seyton, "and when the sun is down, have him to the Loch of Cleish; heave him in, and let him alone for finding out the bottom."

"Under your favour, sir," said George Douglas, "it shall not be so.—Keltie, thou art a true fellow to me, and thy having been so shall advantage thee. Send or take the body to the church of Ballingry, and tell what tale thou wilt of his having fallen in a brawl with some unruly guests of thine. Auchtermuchty knows nought else, nor are the times so peaceful as to admit close looking into such accounts."

"Nay, let him tell the truth," said Seyton, "so far as it harms not our scheme.—Say that Henry Seyton met with him, my good fellow—I care not a brass bodle for the feud."

"A feud with the Douglas was ever to be feared, however," said George, displeasure mingling with his natural deep gravity of manner.

"Not when the best of the name is on my side," replied Seyton.

"Alas! Henry, if thou meanest me, I am but half a Douglas in this emprize—half head, half heart, and half hand—But I will think on one who can never be forgotten, and be all, or more, than any of my ancestors was ever.—Keltie, say it was Henry Seyton did the deed; but beware, not a word of me!—Let Auchtermuchty carry this packet (which he had re-sealed with his own signet) to my father at Edinburgh; and here is to pay for the funeral expences, and thy loss of custom."

"And the washing of the floor," said the landlord, "which will be an extraordinary job; for blood, they say, will scarcely ever cleanse out."

"But as for your plan," said George of Douglas, addressing Seyton, as if in continuation of what they had been before treating of, "it has a good face; but, under your favour, you are yourself too hot and too young, besides other reasons which are much against your playing the part you propose."

"We will consult the Father Abbot upon it," said the youth. "Do you ride to Kinross to-night?"

"Ay—so I purpose," answered Douglas; "the night will be dark, and suits a muffled man.—Keltie, I forgot, there should be a stone laid on that man's grave, recording his name, and his only merit, which was being a faithful servant to the Douglas."

"What religion was the man of?" said Seyton; "he used words which made me fear I have sent Satan a subject before his time."

"I can tell you little of that," said George Douglas; "he was noted for disliking both Rome and Geneva, and spoke of lights he had learned among the fierce sectaries of Lower Germany—an evil doctrine it was, if we judge by the fruits. God keep us from presumptuously judging of Heaven's secrets!"

"Amen!" said the young Seyton, "and from meeting any encounter this evening."

"It is not thy wont to pray so," said George Douglas.

"No! I leave that to you," replied the youth, "when you are seized with scruples of engaging with your father's vassals. But I would fain have this old man's blood off these hands of mine ere I shed more—I will confess to the Abbot to-night, and I trust to have light penance for ridding the earth of such a miscreant. All I sorrow for is, that he was not a score of years younger—He drew steel first, however, that is one comfort."

CHAPTER VII.

Ay, Pedro,—Come you here with mask and lantern,
Ladder of ropes and other moonshine tools—
Why, youngster, thou mayest cheat the old Duenna,
Flatter the waiting-woman, bribe the valet;
But know, that I her father play the Gryphon,
Tameless and sleepless, proof to fraud or bribe,
And guard the hidden treasure of her beauty.

The Spanish Father.

The tenor of our tale carries us back to the Castle of Lochleven, where we take up the order of events on the same remarkable day on which Dryfesdale had been dismissed from the castle. It was past noon, the usual hour of dinner, yet no preparations seemed made for the Queen's entertainment. Mary herself was retired into her own apartment, where she was closely engaged in writing. Her attendants were together in the presence-chamber, and much

disposed to speculate on the delay of the dinner; for it may be recollected that their breakfast had been interrupted. "I believe in my conscience," said the page, "that having found the poisoning scheme miscarry, by having gone to the wrong merchant for their deadly wares, they are now about to try how famine will work upon us."

Lady Fleming was somewhat alarmed at this surmise, but comforted herself by observing that the chimney of the kitchen had reeked that whole day in a manner which contradicted the supposition.—Catherine Seyton presently exclaimed, "They were bearing the dishes across the court, marshalled by the Lady Lochleven herself, dressed out in her highest and stiffest ruff, with her partlet and sleeves of cyprus, and her huge old-fashioned farthingale of crimson velvet."

"I believe on my word," said the page, approaching the window also, "it was in that very farthingale that she captivated the heart of gentle King Jamie, which pro-

cured our poor Queen her precious bargain of a brother."

"That may hardly be, Master Roland," answered the Lady Fleming, who was a great recorder of the changes of fashion, "since the farthingales came first in when the Queen Regent went to Saint Andrews, after the battle of Pinkie, and were then called *Vertgadins*"——

She would have proceeded farther in this important discussion, but was interrupted by the entrance of the Lady of Lochleven, who preceded the servants bearing the dishes, and formally discharged the duty of tasting each of them. Lady Fleming regretted, in courtly phrase, that the Lady of Lochleven should have undertaken so troublesome an office.

"After the strange incident of this day, madam," said the Lady, "it is necessary for my honour and that of my son, that I partake whatever is offered to my involuntary guest. Please to inform the Lady Mary that I attend her commands."

"Her Majesty," replied Lady Fleming, with due emphasis on the word, "shall be informed that the Lady Lochleven waits."

Mary appeared instantly, and addressed her hostess with courtesy, which even approached to something more cordial. "This is nobly done, Lady Lochleven;" she said, "for though we ourselves apprehend no danger under your roof, our ladies have been much alarmed by this morning's chance, and our meal will be the more cheerful for your presence and assurance. Please you to sit down."

The Lady Lochleven obeyed the Queen's commands, and Roland performed the office of carver and attendant as usual. But, notwithstanding what the Queen had said, the meal was silent and unsocial; and every effort which Mary made to excite some conversation, died away under the solemn and chill replies of the Lady of Lochleven. At length it became plain that the Queen, who had considered her advances as a conde-

scension on her part, and who piqued herself justly on her powers of pleasing, became offended at the repulsive conduct of her hostess. After looking with a significant glance at Lady Fleming and Catherine, she slightly shrugged her shoulders, and remained silent. A pause ensued, at the end of which the Lady Douglas spoke.—" I perceive, Madam, I am a check on the mirth of this fair company. I pray you to excuse me—I am a widow—alone here in a most perilous charge—deserted by my grandson—betrayed by my servant—I am little worthy of the grace you do me in offering me a seat at your table, where I am aware that wit and pastime are usually expected from the guests."

" If the Lady Lochleven is serious," said the Queen, " we wonder by what simplicity she expects our present meals to be seasoned with mirth. If she is a widow, she lives honoured and uncontrouled, at the head of her late husband's household. But

I know, at least, of one widowed woman in the world, before whom the words desertion and betrayal ought never to be mentioned, since no one has been made so bitterly acquainted with their import."

"I meant not to remind you of your misfortunes, by the mention of mine," answered the Lady Lochleven, and there was again a deep silence.

Mary at length addressed Lady Fleming. "We can commit no deadly sins here, *ma bonne*, where we are so well warded and looked to; but if we could, this Carthusian silence might be useful as a kind of penance. If thou hast adjusted my wimple amiss, my Fleming, or if Catherine hath made a wry stitch in her broidery, when she was thinking of something else than her work, or if Roland Græme hath missed a wild-duck on the wing, and broke a quarrel-pane of glass in the turret window, as chanced to him a week since, now is the time to think on your sins and to repent of them."

"Madam, I speak with all reverence,"

said the Lady Lochleven; "but I am old, and claim the privilege of age. Methinks your followers might find fitter subjects for repentance than the trifles you mention, and so mention—once more, I crave your pardon—as if you jested with sin and with repentance both."

"You have been our taster, Lady Lochleven," said the Queen, "I perceive you would eke out your duty with that of our Father Confessor—and since you chuse that our conversation should be serious, may I ask you why the Regent's promise—since your son so styles himself—has not been kept to me in that respect? From time to time this promise has been renewed, and as constantly broken. Methinks, those who pretend themselves to so much gravity and sanctity, should not debar from others the religious succours which their consciences require."

"Madam, the Earl of Murray was indeed weak enough," said the Lady Lochleven, "to give so far way to your unhappy

prejudices, and a religioner of the Pope presented himself on his part at our town of Kinross.—But the Douglas is Lord of his own castle, and will not permit his threshold to be darkened, no not for a single moment, by an emissary belonging to the Bishop of Rome."

"Methinks it were well, then," said Mary, "that my Lord Regent would send me where there is less scruple and more charity."

"In this, madam," answered the Lady Lochleven, "you mistake the nature both of charity and of religion. Charity giveth to those who are in delirium the medicaments which may avail their health, but refuses those enticing cates and liquors which please the palate, but augment the disease."

"This your charity, Lady Lochleven, is pure cruelty, under the hypocritical disguise of friendly care. I am oppressed amongst you as if you meant the destruction both of my body and soul; but Hea-

ven will not endure such iniquity for ever, and they who are the most active agents in it may speedily expect their reward."

At this moment Randal entered the apartment, with a look so much perturbed, that the Lady Fleming uttered a faint scream, the Queen was obviously startled, and the Lady of Lochleven, though too bold and proud to evince any marked signs of alarm, asked hastily what was the matter?

"Dryfesdale has been slain, madam," was the reply; "murdered as soon as he gained the dry land by young Master Henry Seyton."

It was now Catherine's turn to start and grow pale—"Has the murderer of the Douglas's vassal escaped?" was the Lady's hasty question.

"There was none to challenge him but old Keltie, and the carrier Auchtermuchty," replied Randal; "unlikely men to slay one of the frackest* youths in Scotland of his

* Boldest—most forward.

years, and who was sure to have friends and partakers at no great distance."

"Was the deed completed?" said the Lady.

"Done, and done thoroughly," said Randal; "a Seyton seldom strikes twice—But the body was not despoiled, and your honour's packet goes forward to Edinburgh by Auchtermuchty, who leaves Keltie-Bridge early to-morrow—marry, he has drunk two bottles of aquavitæ to put the fright out of his head, and now sleeps them off beside his cart-avers."

There was a pause when this fatal tale was told. The Queen and Lady Douglas looked on each other, as if each thought how she could best turn the incident to her own advantage in the controversy, which was continually kept alive betwixt them—Catherine Seyton kept her kerchief at her eyes and wept.

"You see, madam, the bloody maxims and practice of the deluded papists," said Lady Lochleven.

"Nay, madam," replied the Queen, "say rather you see the deserved judgment of Heaven upon a Calvinistical poisoner."

"Dryfesdale was not of the Church of Geneva or of Scotland," said the Lady Lochleven, hastily.

"He was a heretic, however," replied Mary; "there is but one true and unerring guide, the others lead alike into error."

"Well, madam, I trust it will reconcile you to your retreat, that this deed shews the temper of those who might wish you at liberty. Blood-thirsty tyrants, and cruel man-quellers are they all, from the Clan-Ranald and Clan-Tosach in the north, to the Fernihherst and Buccleuch in the south—the murdering Seytons in the east, and"——

"Methinks, madam, you forget that I am a Seyton?" said Catherine, withdrawing her kerchief from her face, which was now coloured with indignation.

"If I had forgot it, fair mistress, your forward bearing would have reminded me," said Lady Lochleven.

"If my brother has slain the villain that would have poisoned his Sovereign, and his sister," said Catherine, "I am only so far sorry that he should have spared the hangman his proper task. For aught further, had it been the best Douglas in the land, he would have been honoured in falling by the Seyton's sword."

"Farewell, gay mistress," said the Lady of Lochleven, rising to withdraw; "it is such maidens as you, who make giddy-fashioned revellers and deadly brawlers. Boys must needs rise, forsooth, in the grace of some sprightly damsel, who thinks to dance through life as through a French galliard." She then made her reverence to the Queen, and added, "Do you also, madam, fare you well, till curfew time, when I will make, perchance, more bold than welcome in attending upon your supper board.—Come with me, Randal, and tell me more of this cruel fact."

"'Tis an extraordinary chance," said the Queen, when she had departed; "and,

villain as he was, I would this man had been spared time for repentance. We will cause something to be done for his soul, if we ever attain our liberty, and the Church will permit such grace to an heretic.—But, tell me, Catherine, *ma mignonne*—this brother of thine, who is so *frack*, as the fellow called him, bears he the same wonderful likeness to thee as formerly?"

"If your Grace means in temper, you know whether I am so *frack* as the serving-man spoke him."

"Nay, thou art prompt enough in all reasonable conscience," replied the Queen; "but thou art my own darling notwithstanding—But I meant, is this thy twin-brother as like thee in form and features as formerly? I remember thy dear mother alleged it as a reason for destining thee to the veil, that, were ye both to go at large, thou wouldst surely get the credit of some of thy brother's mad pranks."

"I believe, madam," said Catherine, "there are some unusually simple people

even yet, who can hardly distinguish betwixt us, especially when, for diversion's sake, my brother hath taken a female dress," —and, as she spoke, she gave a quick glance at Roland Græme, to whom this conversation conveyed a ray of light, welcome as ever streamed into the dungeon of a captive through the door which opened to give him freedom.

"He must be a handsome cavalier this brother of thine, if he be so like you," replied Mary. "He was in France, I think, for these late years, so that I saw him not at Holyrood."

"His looks, madam, have never been much found fault with," answered Catherine Seyton; "but I would he had less of that angry and heady spirit which evil times have encouraged amongst our young nobles. God knows, I grudge not his life in your Grace's quarrel; and love him for the willingness with which he labours for your rescue. But wherefore should he brawl with an old ruffianly serving-man, and stain

at once his name with such a broil, and his hands with the blood of an old and ignoble wretch?"

"Nay, be patient, Catherine; I will not have thee traduce my gallant young knight. With Henry for my knight, and Roland Græme for my trusty squire, methinks I am like a princess of romance, who may shortly set at defiance the dungeons and the weapons of all wicked sorcerers.—But my head aches with the agitation of the day. Take me *La Mer des Histoires*, and resume where we left off on Wednesday.—Our Lady help thy head, girl, or rather may she help thy heart!—I asked thee for the Sea of Histories, and thou hast brought *La Cronique d'Amour*."

Once embarked upon the Sea of Histories, the Queen continued her labours with her needle, while Lady Fleming and Catherine read to her alternately for two hours.

As to Roland Græme, it is probable that he continued in secret intent upon the Chronicle of Love, notwithstanding the censure

which the Queen seemed to pass upon that branch of study. He now remembered a thousand circumstances of voice and manner, which, had his own prepossession been less, must surely have discriminated the brother from the sister; and he felt ashamed, that, having as it were by heart every particular of Catherine's gestures, words, and manners, he should have thought her, notwithstanding her spirits and levity, capable of assuming the bold step, loud tones, and forward assurance, which accorded well enough with her brother's hasty and masculine character. He endeavoured repeatedly to catch a glance of Catherine's eye, that he might judge how she was disposed to look upon him since he had made the discovery, but he was unsuccessful; for Catherine, when she was not reading herself, seemed to take so much interest in the exploits of the Teutonic knights against the Heathens of Esthonia and Livonia, that he could not surprise her eye even for a second. But when, closing the book, the Queen com-

manded their attendance in the garden, Mary, perhaps of set purpose, (for Roland's anxiety could not escape so practised an observer,) afforded him a favourable opportunity of accosting his mistress. The Queen commanded them to a little distance, while she engaged Lady Fleming in a particular and private conversation; the subject whereof, we learn from another authority, to have been the comparative excellence of the high standing ruff and the falling band. Roland must have been duller, and more sheepish than ever was youthful lover, if he had not endeavoured to avail himself of this opportunity.

"I have been longing this whole evening to ask of you, fair Catherine," said the page, "how foolish and unapprehensive you must have thought me, in being capable to mistake betwixt your brother and you?"

"The circumstance does indeed little honour to my rustic manners," said Catherine, "since those of a wild young man were so readily mistaken for mine. But I shall grow

wiser in time; and with that view I am determined not to think of your follies, but to correct my own."

"It will be the lighter subject of meditation of the two," said Roland.

"I know not that," said Catherine, very gravely; "I fear we have been both unpardonably foolish."

"I have been mad," said Roland, "unpardonably mad. But you, lovely Catherine"——

"I," said Catherine, in the same tone of unusual gravity, "have too long suffered you to use such expressions towards me—I fear I can permit it no longer, and I blame myself for the pain it may give you."

"And what can have happened so suddenly to change our relation to each other, or alter, with such sudden cruelty, your whole deportment to me?"

"I can hardly tell," replied Catherine, "unless it is that the events of the day have impressed on my mind the necessity of our observing more distance to each other—a

chance similar to that which betrayed to you the existence of my brother, may make known to Henry the terms you have used to me; and, alas! his whole conduct, as well as his deed this day, makes me too justly apprehensive of the consequences."

"Fear nothing for that, fair Catherine," answered the page; "I am well able to protect myself against risks of that nature."

"That is to say," replied she, "that you would fight with my twin-brother to shew your regard for his sister? I have heard the Queen say, in her sad hours, that men are, in love or in hate, the most selfish animals of creation; and your carelessness in this matter looks very like it. But be not so much abashed—you are no worse than others."

"You do me injustice, Catherine," replied the page, "I thought but of being threatened with a sword, and did not remember in whose hand your fancy had placed it. If your brother stood before me, with his drawn weapon in his hand, so like

as he is to you in word, person, and favour, he might shed my life's-blood ere I could find in my heart to resist him to his injury."

"Alas!" said she, "it is not my brother alone. But you remember only the singular circumstances in which we have met in equality, and I may say in intimacy. You think not, that whenever I re-enter my father's house, there is a gulph between us you may not pass, but with peril of your life.—Your only known relative is of wild and singular habits, of a hostile and broken clan—the rest of your lineage unknown—forgive me that I speak what is the undeniable truth."

"Love, my beautiful Catherine, despises genealogies," answered Roland Græme.

"Love may, but so will not the Lord Seyton," rejoined the damsel.

"The Queen, thy mistress and mine, she will intercede. O! drive me not from you at the moment I thought myself most happy!—and if I shall aid her deliverance, said not yourself that you and she would become my debtors?"

"All Scotland will become your debtors," said Catherine; "but for the active effects you might hope from our gratitude, you must remember I am wholly subjected to my father; and the poor Queen is, for a long time, more likely to be dependent on the pleasure of the nobles of her party, than possessed of power to controul them."

"Be it so," replied Roland; "my deeds shall controul prejudice itself—it is a bustling world, and I will have my share. The Knight of Avenel, high as he now stands, rose from as obscure an origin as mine."

"Ay!" said Catherine, "there spoke the doughty knight of romance, that will cut his way to the imprisoned princess, through fiends and fiery dragons."

"But if I can set the princess at large, and procure her the freedom of her own choice," said the page, "where, dearest Catherine, will that choice alight?"

"Release the princess from duresse, and she will tell you," said the damsel; and

breaking off the conversation abruptly, she joined the Queen so suddenly, that Mary exclaimed, half aloud,

"No more tidings of evil import—no dissention, I trust, in my limited household?"—Then looking on Catherine's blushing cheek, and Roland's expanded brow and glancing eye—"No—no," she said, "I see all is well—*Ma petite mignonne*, go to my apartment and fetch me down—let me see—ay fetch my pomander box."

And having thus disposed of her attendant in the manner best qualified to hide her confusion, the Queen added, speaking apart to Roland, "I should at least have two grateful subjects of Catherine and you; for what sovereign but Mary would aid true-love so willingly?—Ay, you lay your hand on your sword—your *petite flamberge a rien* there—Well, short time will shew if all the good be true that is protested to us.—I hear them toll curfew from Kinross. To our chamber—this old dame hath promised to be with

us again at our evening meal. Were it not for the hope of speedy deliverance, her presence would drive me distracted. But I will be patient."

"I profess," said Catherine, "I would I could be Henry, with all a man's privileges for one moment—I long to throw my plate at that confect of pride, and formality, and ill-nature."

The Lady Fleming reprimanded her young companion for this explosion of impatience; the Queen laughed, and they went to the presence-chamber, where almost immediately entered supper, and the Lady of the Castle. The Queen, strong in her prudent resolutions, endured her presence with great fortitude and equanimity, until her patience was disturbed by a new form, which had hitherto made no part of the ceremonial of the castle. When the other attendant had retired, Randal entered, bearing the keys of the castle fastened upon a chain, and, announcing that the

watch was set, and the gates locked, delivered the keys with all reverence to the Lady of Lochleven.

The Queen and her ladies exchanged with each other a look of disappointment, anger, and vexation, and Mary said aloud, "We cannot regret the smallness of our court, when we see our hostess discharge in person so many of its offices. In addition to her charges of principal steward of our household and grand almoner, she has to-night done duty as captain of our guard."

"And will continue to do so in future, madam," answered the Lady Lochleven, with much gravity; "the history of Scotland may teach me how ill the duty is performed, which is done by an accredited deputy—We have heard, madam, of favourites of later date, and as little merit, as Oliver Sinclair."

"O, madam," replied the Queen, "my father had his female as well as his male fa-

vourites—there were the Ladies Sandilands and Olifaunt, and some others, methinks; but their names cannot survive in the memory of so grave a person as you."

The Lady Lochleven looked as if she could have slain the Queen on the spot, but commanded her temper, and retired from the apartment, bearing in her hand the ponderous bunch of keys.

"Now God be praised for that woman's youthful frailty," said the Queen. "Had she not that weak point in her character, I might waste my words on her in vain—But that stain is the very reverse of what is said of the witch's mark—I can make her feel there, though she is otherwise insensible all over—But how say you, girls—here is a new difficulty—How are these keys to be come by?—there is no deceiving or bribing this dragon, I trow."

"May I crave to know," said Roland, "whether, if your Grace were beyond the walls of the castle, you could find means of

conveyance to the firm land, and protection when you are there."

"Trust us for that, Roland," said the Queen; "for to that point our scheme is indifferent well laid."

"Then if your Grace will permit me to speak my mind, I think I could be of some use in this matter."

"As how, my good youth?—speak on," said the Queen, "and fearlessly."

"My patron the Knight of Avenel used to compel the youth educated in his household to learn the use of axe and hammer, and working in wood and iron—he used to speak of old northern champions, who forged their own weapons, and of the Highland Captain Donald nan Ord, or Donald of the Hammer, whom he himself knew, and who used to work at the anvil with a sledge-hammer in each hand. Some said he praised this art, because he was himself of churl's blood. However, I gained some practice in it, as the Lady Catherine Seyton

partly knows; for since we were here I wrought her a silver broach."

"Ay," replied Catherine, "but you should tell her Grace that your workmanship was so indifferent that it broke to pieces next day, and I flung it away."

"Believe her not, Roland," said the Queen; "she wept when it was broken, and put the fragments into her bosom. But for your scheme—could your skill avail to forge a second set of keys?"

"No, madam, because I know not the wards. But I am convinced I could make a set so like that hateful bunch which the lady bore off even now, that could they be exchanged against them by any means, she would never dream she was possessed of the wrong."

"And the good dame, thank heaven, is somewhat blind," said the Queen; "but then for a forge, my boy, and the means of labouring unobserved?"

"The armourer's forge, at which I used sometimes to work with him, is in the round

vault at the bottom of the turret—he was dismissed with the warder for being supposed too much attached to George Douglas. The people are accustomed to see me work there, and I will find some excuse that will pass current with them for putting bellows and anvil to work."

"The scheme has a promising face," said the Queen; "about it, my lad, with all speed, and beware the nature of your work is not discovered."

"Nay, I will take the liberty to draw the bolt against chance visitors, so that I will have time to put away what I am working upon, before I undo the door."

"Will not that of itself attract suspicion, in a place where it is so current already?" said Catherine.

"Not a whit," replied Roland; "Gregory the armourer, and every good hammerman, locks himself in when he is about some masterpiece of craft. Besides, something must be risked."

"Part we then to-night," said the Queen, "and God bless you, my children.—If Mary's head ever rises above water, you shall all arise along with her.

CHAPTER VIII.

It is a time of danger, not of revel,
When churchmen turn masquers.
Spanish Father.

The enterprize of Roland Græme appeared to prosper. A trinket or two, of which the work did not surpass the substance, (for the materials were silver, supplied by the Queen) were judiciously presented to those most likely to be inquisitive into the labours of the forge and anvil, which they thus were induced to reckon profitable to others and harmless in itself. Openly, the page was seen working about such trifles. In private, he forged a number of keys resembling so nearly in weight and in form those which were presented every evening to the Lady Lochleven, that, on a slight inspection, it would have been difficult to perceive the

difference. He brought them to the dark rusty colour by the use of salt and water; and, in the triumph of his art, presented them at length to Queen Mary in her presence-chamber, about an hour before the tolling of the curfew. She looked at them with pleasure, but at the same time with doubt.—"I allow," she said, "that the Lady Lochleven's eyes, which are not of the clearest, may be well deceived, could we pass those keys on her, in place of the real implements of her tyranny. But how is this to be done, and which of my little court dare attempt this *tour de jongleur* with any chance of success? Could we but engage her in some earnest matter of argument--but those which I hold with her, always have been of a kind which make her grasp her keys the faster, as if she said to herself—Here I hold what sets me above your taunts and reproaches—And even for her liberty, Mary Stuart could not stoop to speak the proud heretic fair.—What shall we do? Shall Lady Fleming try her elo-

quence in describing the last new head-tire from Paris?—Alas! the good dame has not changed the fashion of her head-gear since Pinkiefield, for aught that I know. Shall my *mignonne* Catherine sing to her one of those touching airs, which draw the very souls out of me and Roland Græme?—Alas! Dame Margaret Douglas would rather hear a Huguenot psalm sung to the tune of *Reveillez vous belle endormie.*—Cousins and liege counsellors, what is to be done, for our wits are really astray in this matter.—Must our man-at-arms and the champion of our body, Roland Græme, manfully assault the old lady, and take the keys from her *par voie du fait?*"

"Nay! with your Grace's permission," said Roland, "I doubt not to manage the matter with more discretion; for though, in your Grace's service, I do not fear"——

"A host of old women," interrupted Catherine, "each armed with rock and spindle, yet he has no fancy for pikes and partizans."

" They that do not fear fair ladies' tongues," continued the page, " need dread nothing else.—But, gracious Liege, I am well nigh satisfied that I could pass the exchange of these keys on the Lady Lochleven; but I dread the centinel who is now planted nightly in the garden, which, by necessity, we must traverse."

" Our last advices from our friend on the shore have promised us assistance in that matter," replied the Queen.

" And is your Grace well assured of the fidelity and watchfulness of those without?"

" For their fidelity, I will answer with my life, and for their vigilance, I will answer with my life—I will give thee instant proof, my faithful Roland, that they are ingenious and trusty as thyself. Come hither—Nay, Catherine, attend us; we carry not so deft a page into our private chamber alone. Make fast the door of the parlour, Fleming, and warn us if you hear the least step—or stay, go thou to the door, Catherine, (in a whisper) thy ears and thy

wits are both sharper.—Good Fleming, attend us thyself—(and again she whispered) her reverend presence will be as safe a watch on Roland as thine can—so be not jealous, *mignonne*."

Thus speaking, they were lighted by the Lady Fleming into the Queen's bed-room, a small apartment enlightened by a projecting window.

"Look from that window, Roland," she said; "see you amongst the several lights which begin to kindle, and to glimmer palely through the grey of the evening from the village of Kinross—Seest thou, I say, one solitary spark apart from the others, and nearer it seems to the verge of the water?—It is no brighter at this distance than the torch of the poor glow-worm, and yet, my good youth, that light is more dear to Mary Stuart, than every star that twinkles in the blue vault of Heaven. By that signal, I know that more than one true heart are plotting my deliverance; and without that consciousness, and the hope of freedom it

gives me, I had long since stooped to my fate, and died of a broken heart. Plan after plan has been formed and abandoned, but still the light glimmers, and while it glimmers, my hope lives.—O! how many evenings have I sat musing in despair over our ruined schemes, and scarce hoping that I should again see that blessed signal; when it has suddenly kindled, and, like the lights of Saint Elmo in a tempest, brought hope and consolation, where there was only dejection and despair!"

"If I mistake not," answered Roland, "the candle shines from the house of Blinkhoolie, the mail-gardener."

"Thou hast a good eye," said the Queen; "it is there where my trusty lieges—God and the saints pour blessings on them!—hold consultation for my deliverance. The voice of a wretched captive would die on these blue waters, long ere it could mingle in their councils, and yet I can hold communication—I will confide the whole to

thee—I am about to ask those faithful friends, if the moment for the great attempt is nigh—Place the lamp in the window, Fleming."

She obeyed, and immediately withdrew it. No sooner had she done so, than the light in the cottage of the gardener disappeared.

" Now, count," said Queen Mary, " for my heart beats so thick that I cannot count myself."

The Lady Fleming began deliberately to count one, two, three, and when she had arrived at ten, the light on the shore again shewed its pale twinkle.

" Now, Our Lady be praised !" said the Queen ; " it was but two nights since, that the absence of the light remained, while I could tell thirty. The hour of deliverance approaches. May God bless those who labour in it with such truth to me !—alas ! with such hazard to themselves—And bless you too, my children !—Come, we must to

the audience-chamber again. Our absence might excite suspicion, should they serve the supper."

They returned to the presence-chamber, and the evening concluded as usual.

The next morning, at dinner-time, an unusual incident occurred. While Lady Douglas of Lochleven performed her daily duty of assistant and taster at the Queen's table, she was told a man-at-arms had arrived recommended by her son, but without any letter or other token than what he brought by word of mouth.

"Hath he given you that token?" demanded the Lady.

"He reserved it, as I think, for your ladyship's ear," replied Randal.

"He doth well," said the Lady; "tell him to wait in the hall—But no—with your permission, madam, (to the Queen) let him attend me here."

"Since you are pleased to receive your domestics in my presence," said the Queen, "I cannot chuse——"

"My infirmities must plead my excuse, madam," replied the Lady; "the life I must lead here ill suits with the years which have passed over my head, and compels me to waive ceremonial."

"O, my good lady," replied the Queen, "I would there were nought in this your castle more strongly compulsive than the cobweb chains of ceremony; but bolts and bars are harder matters to contend with."

As she spoke, the person announced by Randal entered the room, and Roland Græme at once recognized in him the Abbot Ambrosius.

"What is your name, good fellow?" said the Lady.

"Edward Glendinning," answered the Abbot, with a suitable reverence.

"Art thou of the blood of the Knight of Avenel?" said the Lady of Lochleven.

"Ay, madam, and that nearly," replied the pretended soldier.

"It is likely enough," said the Lady, "for the Knight is the son of his own good works,

and has risen from obscure lineage to his present high rank in the Estate—But he is of sure truth and approved worth, and his kinsman is welcome to us. You hold, unquestionably, the true faith?"

"Do not doubt of it, madam," said the disguised churchman.

"Hast thou a token to me from Sir William Douglas?" said the Lady.

"I have, madam," replied he; "but it must be said in private."

"Thou art right," said the Lady, moving towards the recess of a window; "say in what does it consist?"

"In the words of an old bard," replied the Abbot.

"Repeat them," answered the Lady; and he uttered, in a low tone, the lines from an old poem, called The Howlet,—

"O, Douglas! Douglas!
Tender and true."

"Trusty Sir John Holland!" said the Lady Douglas, apostrophizing the poet

"a kinder heart never inspired a rhime, and the Douglas's honour was ever on thy harp-string! We receive you among our followers, Glendinning—But, Randal, see that he keep the outer ward only, till we shall hear more touching him from our son. —Thou fearest not the night-air, Glendinning?"

"In the cause of the Lady before whom I stand, I fear nothing, madam," answered the disguised Abbot.

"Our garrison, then, is stronger by one trust-worthy soldier," said the matron— "Go to the buttery, and let them make much of thee."

When the Lady Lochleven had retired, the Queen said to Roland Græme, who was now almost constantly in her company, "I spy comfort in that stranger's countenance; I know not why it should be so, but I am well persuaded he is a friend."

"Your Grace's penetration does not deceive you," answered the page; and he informed her that the Abbot of Saint Mary's

himself played the part of the newly arrived soldier.

The Queen crossed herself and looked upwards. "Unworthy sinner that I am," she said, "that for my sake a man so holy, and so high in spiritual office, should wear the garb of a base sworder, and run the risk of dying the death of a traitor!"

"Heaven will protect its own servant, madam," said Catherine Seyton; "his aid would bring a blessing on our undertaking, were it not already blest for its own sake."

"What I admire in my spiritual father," said Roland, "was the steady front with which he looked on me, without giving the least sign of former acquaintance. I did not think the like was possible, since I have ceased to believe that Henry was the same person with Catherine."

"But marked you not how astuceously the good father," said the Queen, "eluded the questions of the woman Lochleven, telling her the very truth, which yet she received not as such?"

Roland thought in his heart, that when the truth was spoken for the purpose of deceiving, it was little better than a lie in disguise. But it was no time to agitate such questions of conscience.

"And now for the signal from the shore," exclaimed Catherine; "my bosom tells me we shall see this night two lights instead of one gleam from that garden of Eden—And then, Roland, do you play your part manfully, and we will dance on the greensward like midnight fairies."

Catherine's conjecture misgave not, nor deceived her. In the evening two beams twinkled from the cottage, instead of one; and the page heard, with beating heart, that the new retainer was ordered to stand centinel on the outside of the castle. When he intimated this news to the Queen, she held her hand out to him—he knelt, and when he raised it to his lips in all dutiful homage, he found it was damp and cold as marble. "For God's sake, madam, droop not now—sink not now."

" Call upon Our Lady, my Liege," said the Lady Fleming—" call upon your tutelar saint."

" Call the spirits of the hundred kings you are descended from," exclaimed the page ; " in this hour of need, the resolution of a monarch were worth the aid of a hundred saints."

" O! Roland Græme," said Mary, in a tone of deep despondency, " be true to me—many have been false to me. Alas! I have not always been true to myself.* My mind misgives me that I shall die in bondage, and that this bold attempt will cost all our lives. It was foretold me by a soothsayer in France, that I should die in prison, and by a violent death, and here comes the hour—O, would to God it found me prepared!"

" Madam," said Catherine Seyton, " remember you are a Queen. Better we all died in bravely attempting to gain our freedom, than remained here to be poisoned, as

men rid them of the noxious vermin that haunt old houses."

"You are right, Catherine," said the Queen; "and Mary will bear her like herself. But, alas! your young and buoyant spirit can ill spell the causes which have broken mine. Forgive me, my children, and farewell for a while—I will prepare both mind and body for this awful venture."

They separated, till again called together by the tolling of the curfew. The Queen appeared grave, but firm and resolved; the Lady Fleming, with the art of an experienced courtier, knew perfectly how to disguise her inward tremors; Catherine's eye was fired, as if with the boldness of the project, and the half smile which dwelt upon her beautiful mouth seemed to contemn all the risk and all the consequences of discovery; Roland, who felt how much success depended on his own address and boldness, summoned together his whole pre-

sence of mind, and, if he found his spirits flag for a moment, cast his eye upon Catherine, whom he thought he had never seen look so beautiful.—I may be foiled, he thought, but with this reward in prospect, they must bring the devil to aid them ere they cross me. Thus resolved, he stood, like a greyhound in the slips, with hand, heart, eye intent upon making and seizing opportunity for the execution of their project.

The keys had, with the wonted ceremonial, been presented to the Lady Lochleven. She stood with her back to the casement, which, like that of the Queen's apartment, commanded a view of Kinross, with the church, which stands at some distance from the town, and nearer to the lake, then connected with the town by straggling cottages. With her back to this casement, then, and her face to the table, on which the keys lay for an instant while she tasted the various dishes which were placed

there, stood the Lady of Lochleven, more provokingly intent than usual—so at least it seemed to her prisoners—upon the huge and heavy bunch of iron, the implements of their restraint. Just when, having finished her ceremony as taster of the Queen's table, she was about to take up the keys, the page, who stood beside her, and had handed her the dishes in succession, looked sideways to the church-yard, and exclaimed he saw corpse candles in the church-yard. The Lady of Lochleven was not without a touch, though a slight one, of the superstitions of the time; the fate of her sons made her alive to omens, and a corpse-light, as it was called, in the family burial-place, boded death. She turned her head towards the casement—saw a distant glimmering—forgot her charge for one second, and in that second were lost the whole fruits of her former vigilance. The page held the forged keys under his cloak, and with great dexterity exchanged them for the real ones. His utmost address could not prevent a

slight clash as he took up the latter bunch. "Who touches the keys?" said the Lady; and while the page answered that the sleeve of his cloak had stirred them, she looked round, possessed herself of the bunch which now occupied the place of the genuine keys, and again turned to gaze at the supposed corpse-candles.

"I hold these gleams," she said, after a moment's consideration, "to come, not from the church-yard, but from the hut of the old gardener Blinkhoolie. I wonder what thrift that churl drives, that of late he hath ever had light in his house till the night grew deep. I thought him an industrious, peaceful man—if he turns resetter of idle companions and night-walkers, the place must be rid of him."

"He may work his baskets perchance," said the page, desirous to stop the train of her suspicion.

"Or nets, may he not?" answered the Lady.

"Ay, madam," said Roland, "for trout and salmon."

"Or for fools and knaves," replied the Lady; "but this shall be looked after to-morrow.—I wish your Grace and your company a good evening.—Randal, attend us." And Randal, who waited in the anti-chamber, after having surrendered his bunch of keys, gave his escort to his mistress as usual, while, leaving the Queen's apartments, she retired to her own.

"To-morrow?" said the page, rubbing his hands with glee as he repeated the Lady's last words, "fools look to to-morrow, and wise folk use to-night.—May I pray you, my gracious Liege, to retire for one half hour, until all the castle is composed to rest. I must go and rub with oil these blessed implements of our freedom. Courage and constancy, and all will go well, providing our friends on the shore fail not to send the boat you spoke of."

"Fear them not," said Catherine, "they

are true as steel—if our dear mistress do but maintain her noble and royal courage."

"Doubt not me, Catherine," replied the Queen; "a while since I was overborne, but I have recalled the spirit of my earlier and more sprightly days, when I used to accompany my armed nobles, and wish to be myself a man, to know what life it was to be in the fields with sword and buckler, jack and knapsack."

"O, the lark lives not a gayer life, nor sings a lighter and gayer song than the merry soldier," answered Catherine. "Your Grace shall be in the midst of them soon, and the look of such a liege Sovereign will make each of your host worth three in the hour of need; but I must to my task."

"We have but brief time," said Queen Mary; "one of the two lights in the cottage is extinguished—that shows the boat is put off."

"They will row very slow," said the page, "or kent where depth permits, to

avoid noise.—To our several gear—I will communicate with the good Father."

At the dead hour of midnight, when all was silent in the castle, the page put the key into the lock of the wicket which opened into the garden, and which was at the bottom of a staircase that descended from the Queen's apartment. "Now, turn smooth and softly, thou good bolt," said he, "if ever oil softened rust!" and his precautions had been so effectual, that the bolt revolved with little or no sound of resistance. He ventured not to cross the threshold, but exchanging a word with the disguised Abbot, asked if the boat were ready.

"This half hour," said the centinel, "she lies beneath the wall, too close under the islet to be seen by the warder, but I fear she will hardly escape his notice in putting off again."

"The darkness," said the page, "and our profound silence, may take her off unobserved, as she came in. Hildebrand has

the watch on the tower—a heavy-headed knave, who holds a can of ale to be the best head-piece upon a night-watch. He sleeps for a wager."

"Then bring the Queen," said the Abbot, "and I will call Henry Seyton to assist them to the boat."

On tiptoe, with noiseless step and suppressed breath, trembling at every rustle of their own apparel, one after another the fair prisoners glided down the winding stair, under the guidance of Roland Græme, and were received at the wicket-gate by Henry Seyton and the churchman. The former seemed instantly to take upon himself the whole direction of the enterprize. "My Lord Abbot," he said, "give my sister your arm—I will conduct the Queen—and the youth will have the honour to guide Lady Fleming."

This was no time to dispute the arrangement, although it was not that which Roland Græme would have chosen. Catherine Seyton, who well knew the garden path,

tripped on before like a sylph, rather leading the Abbot than receiving assistance—the Queen, her native spirit prevailing over female fear, and a thousand painful reflections, moved steadily forward, by assistance of Henry Seyton—while the Lady Fleming encumbered with her fears and her helplessness Roland Græme, who followed in the rear, and who bore under the other arm a packet of necessaries belonging to the Queen. The door of the garden, which communicated with the shore of the islet, yielded to one of the keys of which Roland had possessed himself, although not until he had tried several,—a moment of anxious terror and expectation. The ladies were then partly led, partly carried, to the side of the lake, where a boat with six rowers attended them, the men couched along the bottom to secure them from observation. Henry Seyton placed the Queen in the stern; the Abbot offered to assist Catherine, but she was seated by the Queen's side before he could utter his proffer of help; and Roland Græme was

just lifting Lady Fleming over the boat-side, when a thought suddenly occurred to him, and exclaiming, "Forgotten, forgotten! wait me but one half minute," he replaced on the shore the helpless lady of the bed-chamber, threw the Queen's packet into the boat, and sped back through the garden with the noiseless speed of a bird on the wing.

"By Heaven he is false at last!" said Seyton; "I ever feared it!"

"He is as true," said Catherine, "as Heaven itself, and that I will maintain."

"Be silent, minion," said her brother, "for shame, if not for fear—Fellows, put off, and row for your lives."

"Help me, help me on board!" said the deserted Lady Fleming, and that louder than prudence warranted.

"Put off—put off," cried Henry Seyton; "leave all behind, so the Queen is safe."

"Will you permit this, madam?" said Catherine, imploringly; "you leave your deliverer to death."

"I will not," said the Queen.—"Seyton, I command you to stay at every risk."

"Pardon me, madam, if I disobey," said the intractable young man; and with one hand lifting in Lady Fleming, he begun himself to push off the boat.

She was two fathoms length from the shore, and the rowers were getting her head round, when Roland Græme, arriving, bounded from the beach, and attained the boat, overturning Seyton, on whom he lighted. The youth swore a deep but suppressed oath, and stopping Græme as he stepped towards the stern, said, "Your place is not with high-born dames—keep at the head and trim the vessel—Now give way—give way—Row, for God and the Queen!"

The rowers obeyed, and began to pull vigorously.

"Why did ye not muffle the oars?" said Roland Græme; "the dash must awaken the centinel—Row, lads, and get out of shot; for had not old Hildebrand, the war-

der, supped upon poppy-porridge, this whispering must have waked him."

"It was all thine own delay," said Seyton; "thou shalt reckon with me hereafter for that and other matters."

But Roland's apprehension was verified too instantly to permit him to reply. The centinel, whose slumbering had withstood the whispering, was alarmed by the dash of the oars. His challenge was instantly heard. "A boat—a boat!—bring to, or I shoot!" And, as they continued to ply their oars, he called aloud, "Treason! treason!" rung the bell of the castle, and discharged his harquebuss at the boat. The ladies crowded on each other like startled wild-fowl, at the flash and report of the piece, while the men urged the rowers to the utmost speed. They heard more than one ball whiz along the surface of the lake, at no great distance from their little bark; and from the lights, which glanced like meteors from window to window, it was evident

the whole castle was alarmed, and their escape discovered.

"Pull!" again exclaimed Seyton; "stretch to your oars, or I will spur you to the task with my dagger—they will launch a boat immediately."

"That is cared for," said Roland; "I locked gate and wicket on them when I went back, and no boat will stir from the island this night, if doors of good oak and bolts of iron can keep men within stone-walls.—And now I resign my office of porter of Lochleven, and give the keys to the Kelpie's keeping."

As the heavy keys plunged in the lake, the Abbot, who till then had been repeating his prayers, exclaimed, "Now, bless thee, my son! for thy ready prudence puts shame on us all."

"I knew," said Mary, drawing her breath more freely, as they were now out of reach of the musketry—"I knew my squire's truth, promptitude, and sagacity.—I must

have him dear friends with my no less true knights, Douglas and Seaton--but where, then, is Douglas?"

"Here, madam," answered the deep and melancholy voice of the boatman who sate next her, and who acted as steersman.

"Alas! was it you who stretched your body before me," said the Queen, "when the balls were raining around us?"

"Believe you," said he, in a low tone, "that Douglas would have resigned to any one the chance of protecting his Queen's life with his own?"

The dialogue was here interrupted by a shot or two, from one of those small pieces of artillery, called falconets, then used in defending castles. The shot was too vague to have any effect, but the broader flash, the deeper sound, the louder return, which was made by the midnight echoes of Bennarty, terrified and imposed silence on the liberated prisoners. The boat was alongside of a rude quay or landing place, running out from a garden of considerable ex-

tent, ere any of them again attempted to speak. They landed, and while the Abbot returned thanks aloud to Heaven, which had thus far favoured their enterprize, Douglas enjoyed the best reward of his desperate undertaking, in conducting the Queen to the house of the gardener. Yet, not unmindful of Roland Græme even in that moment of terror and exhaustion, Mary expressly commanded Seyton to give his assistance to Fleming, while Catherine voluntarily, and without bidding, took the arm of the page. Seyton presently resigned Lady Fleming to the care of the Abbot, alleging, he must look after their horses; and his attendants, disencumbering themselves of their boat-cloaks, hastened to assist him.

While Mary spent in the gardener's cottage the few minutes which were necessary to prepare the steeds for their departure, she perceived, in a corner, the old man to whom the garden belonged, and called him

to approach. He came as it were with reluctance.

"How, brother," said the Abbot, "so slow to welcome thy royal Queen and mistress, to liberty and to her kingdom!"

The old man, thus admonished, came forward, and in good terms of speech, gave her Grace joy of her deliverance. The Queen returned him thanks in the most gracious manner, and added, "It will remain to us to offer some immediate reward for your fidelity, for we wot well your house has been long the refuge in which our trusty servants have met to concert measures for our freedom." So saying, she offered gold, and added, "We will consider your services more fully hereafter."

"Kneel, brother," said the Abbot, "kneel instantly, and thank her Grace's kindness."

"Good brother, that wert once a few steps under me, and art still many years younger," replied the gardener pettishly, "let me do mine acknowledgments in my own way. Queens have knelt to me ere

now, and in truth my knees are too old and stiff to bend even to this lovely-faced lady. May it please your Grace, if your Grace's servants have occupied my house, so that I could not call it mine own—if they have trodden down my flowers in the zeal of their midnight comings and goings, and destroyed the hope of the fruit season, by bringing their war-horses into my garden, I do but crave of your Grace in requital, that you will chuse your residence as far from me as possible. I am an old man, who would willingly creep to my grave as easily as he can, in peace, good will, and quiet labour."

"I promise you fairly, good man," said the Queen, "I will not make yonder castle my residence again, if I can help it. But let me press on you this money—it will make some amends for the havoc we have made in your little garden and orchard."

"I thank your Grace, but it will make me not the least amends," said the old man. "The ruined labours of a whole year are

not so easily replaced to him who has per chance but that one year to live; and besides, they tell me I must leave this place and become a wanderer in mine old age—I that have nothing on earth saving these fruit-trees, and a few old parchments and family secrets not worth knowing. As for gold, if I had loved it, I might have remained Lord Abbot of Saint Mary's—and yet, I wot not—for, if Abbot Boniface be but the poor peasant Blinkhoolie, his successor the Abbot Ambrosius is still transmuted for the worse into the guise of a sword-and-buckler-man."

"Is this indeed the Abbot Boniface of whom I have heard?" said the Queen. "It is I who should have bent the knee for your blessing, good Father."

"Bend no knee to me, Lady! The blessing of an old man who is no longer an Abbot, go with you over dale and down—I hear the trampling of your horses."

"Farewell, Father," said the Queen. "When we are once more seated at Holy-

rood, we will neither forget thee nor thine injured garden."

"Forget us both," said the Ex-Abbot Boniface, "and may God be with you!"

As they hurried out of the house, they heard the old man talking and muttering to himself, as he hastily drew bolt and bar behind them.

"The revenge of the Douglasses will reach the poor old man," said the Queen. "God help me, I ruin every one whom I approach."

"His safety is cared for," said Seyton; "he must not remain here, but will be privately conducted to a place of greater security. But I would your Grace were in your saddle.—To horse! to horse!"

The party of Seyton and of Douglas were increased to about ten by those attendants who had remained with the horses. The Queen and her ladies, with all the rest who came from the boat, were instantly mounted, and holding aloof from the village, which was already alarmed by the firing from the

castle, with Douglas acting as their guide, they soon reached the open ground, and began to ride as fast as was consistent with keeping together in good order.

CHAPTER IX.

He mounted himself on a coal-black steed,
  And her on a freckled grey,
With a bugelet horn hung down from his side,
  And roundly they rode away.

Old Ballad.

The influence of the free air, the rushing of the horses over high and low, the ringing of the bridles, the excitation at once arising from a sense of freedom and of rapid motion, gradually dispelled the confused and dejected sort of stupefaction by which Queen Mary was at first overwhelmed. She could not at last conceal the change of her feelings to the person who rode at her rein, and who she doubted not was the Father Ambrosius; for Seyton, with all the heady impetuosity of a youth, proud, and justly so, of his first successful adventure,

assumed all the bustle and importance of commander of the little party, which escorted, in the language of the time, the Fortune of Scotland. He now led the van, now checked his bounding steed till the rear had come up, exhorted the leaders to keep a steady, though rapid pace, and commanded those who were hindmost of the party to use their spurs, and allow no interval to take place in their line of march; and anon he was beside the Queen, or her ladies, enquiring how they brooked the hasty journey, and whether they had any commands for him. But while Seyton thus busied himself with some advantage, and a good deal of ostentation, the horseman who rode beside the Queen gave her his full and undivided attention, as if he had been waiting upon some superior being. When the road was rugged and dangerous, he abandoned almost entirely the care of his own horse, and kept his hand constantly upon the Queen's bridle; a river or larger brook traversed their course, and his left arm retain-

ed her in the saddle, while his right held her palfrey's rein.

"I had not thought, reverend Father," said the Queen, when they reached the other bank, "that the convent bred such good horsemen."—The person she addressed sighed, but made no other answer.—"I know not how it is," said Queen Mary, "either the sense of freedom, or the pleasure of my favourite exercise, from which I have been so long debarred, or both combined, seem to have given wings to me—no fish ever shot through the water, no bird through the air, with the hurried feeling of liberty and rapture with which I sweep through this night-wind, and over these wolds. Nay, such is the magic of feeling myself once more in the saddle, that I could almost swear I am at this moment mounted on my own favourite Rosabelle, who was never matched in Scotland for swiftness, for ease of motion, and for sureness of foot."

"And if the horse which bears so dear a burthen could speak," answered the deep

voice of the melancholy George of Douglas, " would she not reply, who but Rosabelle ought at such an emergence as this to serve her beloved mistress, or who but Douglas ought to hold her bridle-rein !"

Queen Mary started ; she foresaw at once all the evils like to arise to herself and him from the deep enthusiastic passion of this youth ; but her feelings as a woman, grateful at once and compassionate, prevented her assuming the dignity of the Queen, and she endeavoured to continue the conversation in an indifferent tone.

" Methought," she said, " I heard that, at the division of my spoils, Rosabelle had become the property of Lord Morton's paramour and ladye-love, Alice."

" The noble palfrey had indeed been destined to so base a lot," answered Douglas ; " she was kept under four keys, and under the charge of a numerous crew of grooms and domestics—but Queen Mary needed Rosabelle, and Rosabelle is here."

" And was it well, Douglas," said Queen

Mary, " when such fearful risks of various kinds must needs be encountered, that you should augment their perils to yourself, for a subject of so little moment as a palfrey ?"

" Do you call that of little moment which has afforded you a moment's pleasure ?—Did you not start with joy when I first said you were mounted on Rosabelle ?—And to purchase you that pleasure, though it were to last no longer than the flash of lightning doth, would not Douglas have risked his life a thousand times !"

" O, peace, Douglas, peace," said the Queen, " this is an unfitting language ; and, besides, I would speak," said she, recollecting herself, " with the Abbot of Saint Mary's—Nay, Douglas, I will not let you quit my rein in displeasure."

" Displeasure, lady !" answered Douglas ; " alas ! sorrow is all that I can feel for your well-warranted contempt—I should be as soon displeased with Heaven for refusing the wildest wish which mortal can form."

" Abide by my rein, however," said Mary,

"there is room for my Lord Abbot on the other side; and, besides, I doubt if his assistance would be so useful to Rosabelle and me as yours has been, should the road again require it."

The Abbot came up on the other side, and she immediately opened a conversation with him on the topic of the state of parties, and the plan fittest for her to pursue in consequence of her deliverance. In this conversation Douglas took little share, and never but when directly applied to by the Queen, while, as before, his attention seemed entirely engrossed by the care of the Queen's personal safety. She learned, however, she had a new obligation to him, since by his contrivance the Abbot, whom he had furnished with the family pass-word, was introduced into the castle as one of the garrison.

Long before day-break they ended their hasty and perilous journey before the gates of West Niddrie, a castle in West Lothian, belonging to Lord Seyton. When the Queen was about to alight, Henry Seyton,

preventing Douglas, received her in his arms, and, kneeling down, prayed her Majesty to enter the house of his father, her faithful servant.

"Your Grace," he added, "may repose yourself here in perfect safety—it is already garrisoned with good men for your protection; and I have sent a post to my father, whose instant arrival, at the head of five hundred men, may be looked for. Do not dismay yourself, therefore, should your sleep be broken by the trampling of horse; but only think that here are some scores more of the saucy Seytons come to attend you."

"And by better friends than the saucy Seytons, a Scottish Queen cannot be guarded," replied Mary. "Rosabelle went fleet as the summer breeze, and well nigh as easy; but it is long since I have been a traveller, and I feel that repose will be welcome.—Catherine, *ma mignonne*, you must sleep in my apartment to-night, and bid me welcome to your noble father's castle.—Thanks, thanks to all my kind deliverers—thanks, and a

good night is all I can now offer; but if I climb once more to the upper side of Fortune's wheel, I will not have her bandage. Mary Stuart will keep her eyes open, and distinguish her friends.—Seyton, I need scarce recommend the venerable Abbot, the Douglas, and my page, to your honourable care and hospitality."

Henry Seyton bowed, and Catherine and Lady Fleming attended the Queen to her apartment; where, acknowledging to them that she should have found it difficult in that moment to keep her promise of holding her eyes open, she resigned herself to repose, and awakened not till the morning was advanced.

Mary's first feeling when she awoke, was the doubt of her freedom; and the impulse prompted her to start from bed, and hastily throwing her mantle over her shoulders, to look out at the casement of her apartment. —O sight of joy! instead of the crystal sheet of Lochleven, unaltered save by the influence of the wind, a landscape of wood and

moorland lay before her, and the park around the castle was occupied by the troops of her most faithful and most favourite nobles.

"Rise, rise, Catherine," cried the enraptured Princess; "arise and come hither!—here are swords and spears in true hands, and glittering armour on loyal breasts. Here are banners, my girl, floating in the wind, as lightly as summer-clouds—Great God! what pleasure to my weary eyes to trace their devices—thine own brave father's—the princely Hamilton's—the faithful Fleming's—See—see—they have caught a glimpse of me, and throng towards the window!"

She flung the casement open, and with her bare head, from which the tresses flew back loose and dishevelled, her fair arm slenderly veiled by her mantle, returned by motion and sign, the exulting shouts of the warriors, which echoed for many a furlong around. When the first burst of ecstatic joy was over, she recollected how lightly she was dressed, and, putting her hands

to her face, which was covered with blushes at the recollection, withdrew abruptly from the window. The cause of her retreat was easily conjectured, and increased the general enthusiasm for a Princess, who had forgotten her rank in her haste to acknowledge the services of her subjects. The unadorned beauties of the lovely woman, too, moved the military spectators more than the highest display of her regal state might, and what might have seemed too free in her mode of appearing before them, was more than atoned for by the enthusiasm of the moment, and by the delicacy evinced in her hasty retreat. Often as the shouts died away, as often were they renewed till wood and hill rung again ; and many a deep oath was made that morning on the cross of the sword, that the hand should not part with the weapon, till Mary Stuart was restored to her rights. But what are the promises, what the hopes of mortals ? In ten days, these gallant and devoted votaries were slain, were captives, or were fled.

Mary flung herself into the nearest seat, and still blushing, yet half smiling, exclaimed, " *Ma mignonne,* what will they think of me !—to shew myself to them with my bare feet hastily thrust into the slippers—only this loose mantle about me—my hair loose on my shoulders—my arms and neck so bare—O, the best they can suppose is, that her abode in yonder dungeon has turned their Queen's brain! But my rebel subjects saw me exposed when I was in the depth of affliction, why should I hold colder ceremony with these faithful and loyal men? —Call Fleming, however—I trust she has not forgotten the little mail with my apparel—We must be as brave as we can, *mignonne.*"

" Nay, madam, our good Lady Fleming was in no case to remember any thing."

" You jest, Catherine," said the Queen, somewhat offended; " it is not in her nature, surely, to forget her duty so far as to leave us without a change of apparel."

" Roland Græme, madam, took care of

that," answered Catherine; "for he threw the mail, with your highness's clothes and jewels, into the boat, ere he ran back to lock the gate—I never saw so awkward a page as that youth—the packet well nigh fell on my head."

"He shall make thee amends, my girl," said Queen Mary, laughing, "for that, and all other offences given. But call Fleming, and let us put ourselves into apparel to meet our faithful lords."

Such had been the preparations, and such was the skill of Lady Fleming, that the Queen appeared before her assembled nobles in such attire as became, though it could not enhance, her natural dignity. With the most winning courtesy, she expressed to each individual her grateful thanks, and dignified not only every noble, but many of the lesser barons by her particular attention.

"And whither now, my lords?" she said; "what way do your councils determine for us?"

"To Draphane Castle," replied Lord Arbroath, "if your Majesty is so pleased; and thence to Dumbarton, to place your Grace's person in safety, after which we long to prove if these traitors will abide us in the field."

"And when do we journey?"

"We propose," said Lord Seyton, "if your Grace's fatigue will permit, to take horse after the morning's meal."

"Your pleasure, my lords, is mine," replied the Queen; "we will rule our journey by your wisdom now, and hope hereafter to have the advantage of governing by it our kingdom.—You will permit my ladies and me, my good lords, to break our fasts along with you—We must be half soldiers ourselves, and set state apart."

Low bowed many a helmeted head at this gracious proffer, when the Queen, glancing her eyes through the assembled leaders, missed both Douglas and Roland Græme, and enquired for them in a whisper at Catherine Seyton.

"They are in yonder oratory, madam, sad enough," replied Catherine; and the Queen observed that her favourite's eyes were red with weeping.

"This must not be," said the Queen. "Keep the company amused—I will seek them, and introduce them myself."

She went into the oratory, where the first she met was George Douglas, standing, or rather reclining, in the recess of a window, his back rested against the wall, and his arms folded on his breast. At the sight of the Queen he started, and his countenance shewed, for an instant, an expression of intense delight, which was instantly exchanged for his usual deep melancholy.

"What means this?" she said; "Douglas, why does the first deviser and bold executor of the happy scheme for our freedom, shun the company of his fellow nobles, and of the Sovereign whom he has obliged?"

"Madam," replied Douglas, "those whom you grace with your presence bring followers to aid your cause, wealth to support your state,—can offer you halls in which to feast, and impregnable castles for your defence. I am a houseless and landless man—disinherited by my father, and laid under his malediction—disowned by my name and kindred, who bring nothing to your standard but a single sword, and the poor life of its owner."

"Do you mean to upbraid me, Douglas," replied the Queen, "by shewing what you have lost for my sake?"

"God forbid, madam," interrupted the young man, eagerly; "were it to do again, and had I ten times as much rank and wealth, and twenty times as many friends to lose, my losses would be overpaid by the first step you made, as a free princess, upon the soil of your native kingdom."

"And what then ails you, that you will not rejoice with those who rejoice upon the same joyful occasion?" said the Queen.

"Madam," replied the youth, "though exheridated and disowned, I am yet a Douglas: with most of yonder nobles my family have been in feud for ages—a cold reception amongst them were an insult—and a kind one yet more humiliating."

"For shame, Douglas," replied the Queen, "shake off this unmanly gloom!—I can make thee match for the best of them in title and fortune, and, believe me, I will—Go then amongst them, I command you."

"That word," said Douglas, "is enough—I go. This only let me say, that not for wealth or title would I have done that which I have done—Mary Stuart will not, and the Queen cannot reward me."

So saying, he left the oratory, mingled with the nobles, and placed himself at the bottom of the table. The Queen looked after him, and put her kerchief to her eyes.

"Now, Our Lady pity me," she said, "for no sooner are my prison-cares ended,

than those which beset me as a woman and a queen again thicken around me.—Happy Elizabeth! to whom political interest is every thing, and whose heart never betrays thy head.—And now must I seek this other boy, if I would prevent daggers-drawing betwixt him and the young Seyton."

Roland Græme was in the same oratory, but at such a distance from Douglas, that he could not overhear what passed betwixt the Queen and him. He also was moody and thoughtful, but cleared his brow at the Queen's question, "How now, Roland? you are negligent in your attendance this morning. Are you so much overcome with your night's ride?"

"Not so, gracious madam," answered Græme; "but I am told the Page of Lochleven is not the Page of Niddrie-Castle; and so Master Henry Seyton hath in a manner been pleased to supersede my attendance."

"Now, Heaven forgive me," said the Queen, "how soon these cock-chickens begin to spar!—with children and boys, at least, I may be a queen.—I will have you friends.—Some one send me Henry Seyton hither." As she spoke the last words aloud, the youth whom she had named entered the apartment. "Come hither," she said, "Henry Seyton—I will have you give your hand to this youth, who so well aided in the plan of my escape."

"Willingly, madam," answered Seyton, "so that the youth will grant me, as a boon, that he touch not the hand of another Seyton whom he knows of. My hand has passed current for her's with him before now—and to win my friendship, he must give up thoughts of my sister's love."

"Henry Seyton," said the Queen, "does it become you to add any condition to my command?"

"Madam," said Henry, "I am the servant of your Grace's throne, son to the most loyal man in Scotland. Our goods, our castles, our blood, are your's. Our honour is in our own keeping. I could say more, but"——

"Nay, speak on, rude boy," said the Queen; "what avails it that I am released from Lochleven, if I am thus enthralled under the yoke of my pretended deliverers, and prevented from doing justice to one who has deserved as well of me as yourself?"

"Be not in this distemperature for me, sovereign lady," said Roland; "this young gentleman, being the faithful servant of your Grace, and the brother of Catherine Seyton, bears that about him which will charm down my passion at the hottest."

"I warn thee once more," said Henry Seyton haughtily, "that you make no speech which may infer that the daughter of Lord Seyton can be aught to thee be-

yond what she is to every churl's blood in Scotland."

The Queen was again about to interfere, for Roland's complexion rose, and it became somewhat questionable how long his love for Catherine would suppress the natural fire of his temper. But the interposition of another person, hitherto unseen, prevented Mary's interference. There was in the oratory a separate shrine, inclosed with a high screen of pierced oak, within which was placed an image of Saint Bennet, of peculiar sanctity. From this recess, in which she had been probably engaged in her devotions, issued suddenly Magdalen Græme, and addressed Henry Seyton, in reply to his last offensive expressions—"And of what clay, then, are they moulded these Seytons, that the blood of the Græmes may not aspire to mingle with theirs? Know, proud boy, that when I call this youth my daughter's child, I affirm his descent from Malise Earl of Strathern, called Malise with the

bright brand; and I trow the blood of your house springs from no higher source."

"Good mother," said Seyton, "methinks your sanctity should make you superior to these worldly vanities; and indeed it seems to have rendered you somewhat oblivious touching them, since, to be of gentle descent, the father's name and lineage must be as well qualified as the mother's."

"And if I say he comes of the blood of Avenel by the father's side," replied Magdalen Græme, "name I not blood as richly coloured as thine own?"

"Of Avenel?" said the Queen; "is my page descended of Avenel?"

"Ay, gracious Princess, and the last male heir of that ancient house—Julian Avenel was his father, who fell in battle against the Southron."

"I have heard the tale of sorrow," said the Queen; "it was thy daughter, then, who followed that unfortunate baron to the field, and died on his body? Alas! how

many ways does woman's affection find to work out her own misery! The tale has oft been told and sung in hall and bower—And thou, Roland, art that child of misfortune, who was left among the dead and dying?—Henry Seyton, he is thine equal in blood and birth."

"Scarcely so," said Henry Seyton, "even were he legitimate; but if the tale be told and sung aright, Julian Avenel was a false knight, and his leman a frail and credulous maiden."

"Now, by Heaven, thou liest!" said Roland Græme, and laid his hand on his sword. The entrance of Lord Seyton, however, prevented violence.

"Save me, my lord," said the Queen, "and separate these wild and untamed spirits."

"How, Henry!" said the Baron, "are my castle, and the Queen's presence, no checks on thine insolence and impetuosity?—And with whom art thou brawling?—unless my

eyes spell that token false, it is with the very youth who aided me so gallantly in the skirmish with the Leslies—Let me look, fair youth, at the medal which thou wearest in thy cap. By Saint Bennet, it is the same!—Henry, I command thee to forbear him, as thou lovest my blessing"——

"And as you honour my command," said the Queen; "good service hath he done me."

"Ay, madam," replied young Seyton, "as when he carried the billet inclosed in the sword-sheath to Lochleven—marry, the good youth knew no more than a pack-horse what he was carrying."

"But I, who dedicated him to this great work," said Magdalen Græme—"I, by whose advice and agency this just heir hath been unloosed from her thraldom—I, who spared not the last remaining hope of a falling house in this great action—I, at least, knew and counselled; and what merit may be mine, let the reward, most gracious Queen, descend upon this youth. My n[illegible]

nistry here is ended; you are free—a sovereign Princess, at the head of a gallant army, surrounded by valiant barons—My service could avail you no farther, but might well prejudice you; your fortune now rests upon men's hearts and men's swords—may they prove as trusty as the faith of women!"

"You will not leave us, mother," said the Queen—"you whose practices in our favour were so powerful, who dared so many dangers, and wore so many disguises, to blind our enemies and to confirm our friends—you will not leave us in the dawn of our reviving fortunes, ere we have time to know and to thank you?"

"You cannot know her," answered Magdalen Græme, "who knows not herself—there are times, when, in this woman's frame of mine, there is the strength of him of Gath—in this over-toiled brain, the wisdom of the most sage counsellor—and again the mist is on me, and my strength is weak-

ness, my wisdom folly. I have spoken before princes and cardinals—ay, noble Princess, even before the princes of thine own house of Lorraine; and I know not whence the words of persuasion came which flowed from my lips, and were drunk in by their ears.—And now, even when I most need words of persuasion, there is something which choaks my voice, and robs me of utterance."

"If there be aught in my power to do thee pleasure," said the Queen, "the barely naming it shall avail as well as all thine eloquence."

"Sovereign Lady," replied the enthusiast, "it shames me that at this high moment, something of human frailty should cling to one, whose vows the saints have heard, whose labours in the rightful cause heaven has prospered. But it will be thus while the living spirit is shrined in the clay of mortality—I will yield to the folly," she said, weeping as she spoke, "and it shall

be the last." Then seizing Roland's hand, she led him to the Queen's feet, kneeling herself upon one knee, and causing him to kneel on both. "Mighty Princess," she said, "look on this flower—it was found by a kindly stranger on a bloody field of battle, and long it was ere my anxious eyes saw, and my arms pressed, all that was left of my only daughter. For your sake, and for that of the holy faith we both profess, I could leave this plant, while it was yet tender, to the nurture of strangers—ay, of enemies, to whom, perchance, his blood would have been as wine, had the heretic Glendinning known that he had in his house the heir of Julian Avenel. Since then I have seen him only in a few hours of doubt and dread, and now I part with the child of my love—for ever—for ever.—O, for every weary step I have made in your rightful cause, in this and in foreign lands, give protection to the child whom I must no more call mine!"

"I swear to you, mother," said the Queen, deeply affected, "that, for your sake and his own, his happiness and fortunes shall be our charge!"

"I thank you, daughter of princes," said Magdalen, and pressed her lips, first to the Queen's hand, then to the brow of her grandson. "And now," she said, drying her tears, and rising with dignity, "Earth has had its own, and Heaven claims the rest.—Lioness of Scotland, go forth and conquer! and if the prayers of a devoted votaress can avail thee, they will rise in many a land, and from many a distant shrine. I will glide like a ghost from land to land, from temple to temple; and where the very name of my country is unknown, the priests shall ask who is the Queen of that distant northern land, for whom the aged pilgrim was so fervent in prayer. Farewell! Honour be thine, and earthly prosperity, if it be the will of God—if not, may the penance thou shalt do here, ensure thee

happiness hereafter.—Let no one speak or follow me—my resolution is taken—my vow cannot be cancelled."

She glided from their presence as she spoke, and her last look was upon her beloved grandchild. He would have risen and followed, but the Queen and Lord Seyton interfered.

"Press not on her now," said Lord Seyton, "if you would not lose her for ever. Many a time have we seen the sainted mo ther, and often at the most needful moment; but to press on her privacy, or to thwart her purpose, is a crime which she cannot pardon. I trust we shall yet see her at her need—a holy woman she is for certain, and dedicated wholly to prayer and penance; and hence the heretics hold her as distracted, while Catholics deem her a saint."

"Let me then hope," said the Queen, "that you, my lord, will aid me in the execution of her last request."

"What! in the protection of my young second?—cheerfully—that is, in all that your majesty can think it fitting to ask of me.—Henry, give thy hand upon the instant to Roland Avenel, for so I presume he must now be called."

"And shall be Lord of the Barony," said the Queen, "if God prosper our rightful arms."

"It can only be to restore it to my kind protectress, who now holds it," said young Avenel. "I would rather be landless all my life, than she lost a rood of ground by me."

"Nay," said the Queen, looking to Lord Seyton, "his mind matches his birth—Henry, thou hast not yet given thy hand."

"It is his," said Henry, giving it with some appearance of courtesy, but whispering Roland at the same time. "For all this, thou hast not my sister's."

"May it please your Grace," said Lord Seyton, "now that these passages are over,

to honour our poor meal. Time it were that our banners were reflected in the Clyde. We must to horse with as little stop as may be."

CHAPTER X.

Ay, sir—our ancient crown, in these wild times,
Oft stood upon a cast—the gamester's ducat,
So often staked, and lost, and then regain'd,
Scarce knew so many hazards.

The Spanish Father.

It is not our object to enter into the historical part of the reign of the ill-fated Mary, or to recount, how, during the week which succeeded her flight from Lochleven, her partizans mustered around her with their followers, forming a gallant army, amounting to six thousand men. So much light has been lately thrown on the most minute details of the period, by Mr Chalmers, in his valuable History of Queen Mary, that the reader may be safely referred to it for the most full information which ancient records afford concerning that interesting time. It

is sufficient for our purpose to say, that while Mary's head-quarters were at Hamilton, the Regent and his adherents had, in the King's name, assembled a host at Glasgow, inferior indeed to that of the Queen in numbers, but formidable from the military talents of Murray, Morton, the Laird of Grange, and others, who had been trained from their youth in foreign and domestic wars.

In these circumstances, it was the obvious policy of Queen Mary to avoid a conflict, secure that were her person once in safety, the number of her adherents must daily increase; whereas, the forces of those opposed to her, must, as had frequently happened in the previous history of her reign, have diminished, and their spirits become broken. And so evident was this to her counsellors, that they resolved their first step should be to place the Queen in the strong castle of Dumbarton, there to await the course of events, the arrival of succours from France, and the levies which

were made by her adherents in every province of Scotland. Accordingly, orders were given, that all men should be on horseback or on foot, apparelled in their armour, and ready to follow the Queen's standard in array of battle, the avowed determination being to escort her to the castle of Dumbarton in defiance of her enemies.

The muster was made upon Hamilton-moor, and the march commenced in all the pomp of feudal times. Military music sounded, banners and pennons waved, armour glittered far and wide, and spears glanced and twinkled like stars in a frosty sky. The gallant spectacle of warlike parade was on this occasion dignified by the presence of the Queen herself, who, with a fair retinue of ladies and household attendants, and a special guard of gentlemen, amongst whom young Seyton and Roland were distinguished, gave grace at once and confidence to the army, which spread its ample files before, around, and behind her. Many churchmen also joined the cavalcade, most of whom did

not scruple to assume arms, and declare their intention of wielding them in defence of Mary and the Catholic faith. Not so the Abbot of Saint Mary's. Roland had not seen this prelate since the night of their escape from Lochleven, and he now beheld him, robed in the dress of his order, assume his station near the Queen's person. Roland hastened to pull off his basnet, and beseech the Abbot's blessing.

"Thou hast it, my son!" said the priest; "I see thee now under thy true name, and in thy rightful garb. The helmet with the holly branch befits your brows well—I have long waited for the hour thou shouldst assume it."

"Then you knew of my descent, my good father!" said Roland.

"I did so, but it was under seal of confession from thy grandmother; nor was I at liberty to tell the secret, till she herself should make it known."

"Her reason for such secrecy, my father?" said Roland Avenel.

"Fear, perchance, of my brother—a mistaken fear, for Halbert would not, to ensure himself a kingdom, wrong an orphan; besides, that your title, in quiet times, even had your father done your mother that justice, which I well hope he did, could not have competed with that of my brother's wife, the child of Julian's elder brother."

"They need fear no competition from me," said Avenel. "Scotland is wide enough, and there are many manors to win, without plundering my benefactor. But prove to me, my reverend father, that my father was just to my mother—shew me that I may call myself a legitimate Avenel, and make me your bounden slave for ever."

"Ay," replied the Abbot, "I hear the Seytons hold thee cheap for that stain on thy shield. Something, however, I have learnt from the late Abbot Boniface, which, if it prove sooth, may redeem that reproach."

"Tell me that blessed news," said Roland, "and the future service of my life"——

"Rash boy!" said the Abbot, "I should but madden thine impatient temper, by exciting hopes that may never be fulfilled—and is this a time for them? Think on what perilous march we are bound, and if thou hast a sin unconfessed, neglect not the only leisure which heaven may perchance afford thee for confession and absolution."

"There will be time enough for both, I trust, when we reach Dumbarton," answered the page.

"Ay," said the Abbot, "thou crowest as loudly as the rest—but we are not yet at Dumbarton, and there is a lion in the path."

"Mean you Murray, Morton, and the other rebels at Glasgow, my reverend father? Tush! they dare not look on the royal banner."

"Even so," replied the Abbot, "speak many of those who are wiser than thou.—I have returned from the Southern shires, where I left many a chief of name arming in the Queen's interest—I left the lords

here wise and considerate men—I find them madmen on my return—they are willing, for mere pride and vain glory, to brave the enemy, and to carry the Queen, as it were in triumph, past the walls of Glasgow, and under the beards of the adverse army.—Seldom does heaven smile on such mistimed confidence. We shall be encountered, and that to the purpose."

"And so much the better," replied Roland, "the field of battle was my cradle."

"Beware it be not thy dying-bed," said the Abbot; "but what avails it whispering to young wolves the dangers of the chace? You will know, perchance, ere this day is out, what yonder men are, whom you hold in rash contempt."

"Why, what are they?" said Henry Seyton, who now joined them; "have they sinews of wire, and flesh of iron?—Will lead pierce and steel cut them?—If so, reverent father, we have little to fear."

"They are evil men," said the Abbot,

but the trade of war demands no saints.—Murray and Morton are known to be the best generals in Scotland. No one ever saw Lindesay or Ruthven's back—Kirkaldy of Grange was named by the Constable Montmorency the first soldier in Europe—My brother, too good a name for such a cause, has been far and wide known for a soldier."

"The better, the better," said Seyton triumphantly, "we shall have all these traitors of rank and name in a fair field before us. Our cause is the best, our numbers are the strongest, our hearts and limbs match theirs—Saint Bennet, and set on!"

The Abbot made no reply, but seemed lost in reflection; and his anxiety in some measure communicated itself to Roland Avenel, who ever as their line of march led over a ridge or an eminence, cast an anxious look towards the towers of Glasgow, as if he expected to see symptoms of the enemy issuing forth. It was not that he feared the fight, but the issue was of such deep

import to his country, and to himself, that the natural fire of his spirit burned with a less lively, though with a more intense glow. Love, honour, fame, fortune, all seemed to depend on the issue of one field, rashly hazarded perhaps, but now likely to become unavoidable.

When, at length, their march came to be nearly parallel with the city of Glasgow, Roland became sensible, that the high grounds before them were already in part occupied by a force, shewing, like their own, the royal banner of Scotland, and on the point of being supported by columns of infantry and squadrons of horse, which the city gates had poured forth, and which hastily advanced to sustain those troops who already possessed the ground in front of the Queen's army. Horseman after horseman galloped in from the advanced guard, with tidings that Murray had taken the field with his whole army; that his object was to intercept the Queen's march, and his purpose unquestionable to hazard a battle. It

was now that the tempers of men were subjected to a sudden and a severe trial; and that those who had too presumptuously concluded that they would pass without combat, were something disconcerted, when, at once, and with little time to deliberate, they found themselves placed in front of a resolute enemy.—Their chiefs immediately assembled around the Queen, and held a hasty council of war. Mary's quivering lip confessed the fear which she endeavoured to conceal, under a bold and dignified demeanour. But her efforts were overcome by painful recollections of the disastrous issue of her last appearance in arms at Carberry-hill; and when she meant to have asked them their advice for ordering the battle, she involuntarily enquired whether there were no means of escaping without an engagement.

"Escaping?" answered the Lord Seyton; "When I stand as one to ten of your Highness's enemies, I may think of escape—but never while I stand with three to two!"

"Battle! battle!" exclaimed the assembled lords; "we will drive the rebels from their vantage ground, as the hound turns the hare on the hill side."

"Methinks, my noble lords," said the Abbot, "it were as well to prevent his gaining that advantage.—Our road lies through yonder hamlet on the brow, and whichever party hath the luck to possess it, with its little gardens and enclosures, will attain a post of great defence."

"The reverend father is right," said the Queen. "O, haste thee, Seyton, haste, and get thither before them—they are marching like the wind."

Seyton bowed low, and turned his horse's head.—"Your Highness honours me," he said; "I will instantly press forward, and seize the pass."

"Not before me, my lord, whose charge is the command of the van-guard?" said the Lord of Arbroath.

"Before you, or any Hamilton in Scot-

land," said the Seyton, "having the Queen's command—Follow me, gentlemen, my vassals, and kinsmen—Saint Bennet, and set on!"

"And follow me," said Arbroath, "my noble kinsmen, and brave men-tenants, we will see which will first reach the post of danger. For God and Queen Mary!"

"Ill-omened haste, and most unhappy strife," said the Abbot, who saw them and their followers rush hastily and emulously to ascend the height, without waiting till their men were placed in order.—"And you, gentlemen," he continued, addressing Roland and Seyton, who were each about to follow those who hastened thus disorderly to the conflict, "will you leave the Queen's person unguarded?"

"O, leave me not, gentlemen!" said the Queen—"Roland and Seyton, do not leave me—there are enough of arms to strike in this fell combat—withdraw not those to whom I trust for my safety."

"We may not leave her Grace," said Roland, looking at Seyton, and turning his horse.

"I ever looked when thou wouldst find out that," rejoined the fiery youth.

Roland made no answer, but bit his lip till the blood came, and spurring his horse up to the side of Catherine Seyton's palfrey, he whispered in a low voice, "I never thought to have done aught to deserve you; but this day I have heard myself upbraided with cowardice, and my sword remained still sheathed, and all for the love of you."

"There is madness among us all," said the damsel; "my father, my brother, and you, are all alike bereft of reason. Ye should think only of this poor Queen, and you are all inspired by your own absurd jealousies —The Monk is the only soldier and man of sense amongst you all.—My Lord Abbot," she cried aloud, "were it not better we should draw to the westward, and wait the event that God shall send us, instead of remaining here in the highway, endan-

gering the Queen's person, and cumbering the troops in their advance?"

"You say well, my daughter," replied the Abbot, "had we but one to guide us where the Queen's person may be in safety—Our nobles hurry to the conflict, without casting a thought on the very cause of the war."

"Follow me," said a knight, or man-at-arms, well mounted, and attired completely in black armour, but having the visor of his helmet closed, and bearing no crest on his helmet, or device upon his shield.

"We will follow no stranger," said the Abbot, "without some warrant of his truth."

"I am a stranger and in your hands," said the horseman; "if you wish to know more of me, the Queen herself will be your warrant."

The Queen had remained fixed to the spot, as if disabled by fear, yet mechanically smiling, bowing, and waving her hand,

as banners were lowered and spears depressed before her, while, emulating the strife betwixt Seyton and Arbroath, band on band pressed forward their march towards the enemy. Scarce, however, had the black rider whispered something in her ear, than she assented to what he said; and when he spoke aloud, and with an air of command, "Géntlemen, it is the Queen's pleasure that you should follow me," Mary uttered, with something like eagerness, the word "Yes."

All were in motion in an instant, for the black horseman, throwing off a sort of apathy of manner, which his first appearance indicated, spurred his horse to and fro, making him take such active bounds and short turns as shewed the rider master of the animal; and getting the Queen's little retinue in some order for marching, he led them to the left, directing his course towards a castle, which, crowning a gentle yet commanding eminence, presented an extensive view over

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the country beneath, and, in particular, commanded a view of those heights which both armies hastened to occupy, and which it was now apparent must almost instantly be the scene of struggle and dispute.

"Yonder towers," said the Abbot, questioning the sable horseman, "to whom do they belong?—and are they now in the hands of friends?"

"They are untenanted," replied the stranger, "or, at least, they have no hostile inmates.—But urge these youths, Sir Abbot, to make more haste—this is but an evil time to satisfy their idle curiosity, by peering out upon the battle in which they are to take no share."

"The worse luck mine," said Henry Seyton, who overheard him; "I would rather be under my father's banner at this moment than be made Chamberlain of Holyrood, for this my present duty of peaceful ward well and patiently discharged."

"Your place under your father's banner

will shortly be right dangerous," said Roland Avenel, who, pressing his horse towards the westward, had still his look reverted to the armies; "for I see yonder body of cavalry, which presses from the eastward, will reach the village ere Lord Seyton can gain it."

"They are but cavalry," said Seyton, looking attentively; "they cannot hold the village without shot of harquebuss."

"Look more closely," said Roland; "you will see that each of these horsemen who advance so rapidly from Glasgow, carries a a footman behind him."

"Now, by Heaven, he speaks well!" said the black cavalier; "one of you two must go carry the news to Lord Seyton and Lord Arbroath, that they hasten not their horsemen on before the foot, but advance more regularly."

"Be that my errand," said Roland, "for I first marked the stratagem of the enemy."

"But, by your leave," said Seyton,

" yonder is my father's banner engaged, and it best becomes me to go to the rescue."

" I will stand by the Queen's decision," said Roland Avenel.

" What new appeal?—what new quarrel?" said Queen Mary—" Are there not in yonder dark host enemies enough to Mary Stuart, but must her very friends turn enemies to each other?"

" Nay, madam," said Roland, " the young Master of Seyton and I did but dispute who should leave your person to do a most needful message to the host. He thought his rank entitled him, and I deemed that the person of least consequence, being myself, were better perilled"——

" Not so," said the Queen; " if one must leave me, be it Seyton."

Henry Seyton bowed till the white plumes on his helmet mixed with the flowing mane of his gallant war-horse, then placed himself firm in the saddle, shook his lance aloft with an air of triumph and determination, and striking his horse with the spurs, made

towards his father's banner, which was still advancing up the hill, and dashed his steed over every obstacle that occurred in his headlong path.

"My brother! my father!" exclaimed Catherine, with an expression of agonized apprehension—"they are in the midst of peril, and I in safety!"

"Would to God," said Roland, "that I were with them, and could ransom every drop of their blood by two of mine!"

"Do I not know thou dost wish it?" said Catherine—"Can a woman say to a man what I have well nigh said to thee, and yet think that he could harbour fear or faintness of heart?—There is that in yon distant sound of approaching battle that pleases me even while it affrights me. I would I were a man, that I might feel that stern delight, without the mixture of terror!"

"Ride up, ride up, Lady Catherine Seyton," cried the Abbot, as they still swept on at a rapid pace, and were now close be-

neath the walls of the castle—" ride up, and aid Lady Fleming to support the Queen —she gives way more and more."

They halted and lifted Mary from the saddle, and were about to support her towards the castle, when she said faintly, " Not there—not there—these walls will I never enter more!"

" Be a Queen, madam," said the Abbot, " and forget that you are a woman."

" O, I must forget much much more," answered the unfortunate Mary, in an under tone, " ere I can look with steady eyes on these well-known scenes!—I must forget the days which I spent here as the bride of the lost—the murthered——"

" This is the Castle of Crookstone," said the Lady Fleming, " in which the Queen held her first court after she was married to Darnley."

" Heaven," said the Abbot, " thy hand is upon us!—Bear yet up, madam—your foes are the foes of Holy Church, and God

will this day decide whether Scotland shall be Catholic or heretic."

A heavy and continued fire of cannon and musketry, bore a tremendous burthen to his words, and seemed far more than they to recal the spirits of the Queen.

"To yonder tree," she said, pointing to a yew tree, which grew on a small mount close to the castle; "I know it well—from thence you may see a prospect wide as from the peaks of Schehallion."

And freeing herself from her assistants, she walked with a determined, yet somewhat wild step, up to the stem of the noble yew. The Abbot, Catherine, and Roland Avenel followed her, while Lady Fleming kept back the inferior persons of her train. The black horseman also followed the Queen, waiting on her as closely as the shadow upon the light, but ever remaining at the distance of two or three yards—he folded his arms on his bosom, turned his back to the battle, and seemed solely occu-

pied by gazing on Mary, through the bars of his closed vizor. The Queen regarded him not, but fixed her eyes upon the spreading yew.

"Ay, fair and stately tree," she said, as if at the sight of it she had been rapt away from the present scene, and had overcome the horror which had oppressed her at the first approach to Crookstone, "there thou standest, gay and goodly as ever, though thou hearest the sounds of war, instead of the vows of love. All is gone since I last greeted thee—love and lover—vows and vower—king and kingdom.—How goes the field, my Lord Abbot?—with us I trust—yet what but evil can Mary's eyes witness from this spot!"

Her attendants eagerly bent their eyes on the field of battle, but could discover nothing more than that it was obstinately debated. The small inclosures and cottage gardens in the village, of which they had a full and commanding view, and which lately lay, with their lines of sycamore and ash-

trees, so still and quiet in the mild light of a May sun, were now each converted into a line of fire, canopied by smoke ; and the sustained and çonstant report of the musketry and cannon, mingled with the shouts of the meeting combatants, shewed that as yet neither party had given ground.

"Many a soul finds its final departure to heaven or hell, in these awful thunders," said the Abbot ; "let those that believe in the Holy Church, join me in orisons for victory in this dreadful combat."

"Not here—not here," said the unfortunate Queen ; "pray not here, father, or pray in silence—my mind is too much torn between the past and the present, to dare to approach the heavenly throne—Or, if ye will pray, be it for one whose fondest affections have been her greatest crimes, and who has ceased to be a queen, only because she was a deceived and a tender-hearted woman."

"Were it not well," said Roland, "that

I rode somewhat nearer the hosts, and saw the fate of the day?"

"Do so, in the name of God," said the Abbot; "for if our friends are scattered, our flight must be hasty—but beware thou approach not too nigh the conflict, there is more than thine own life depends on thy safe return."

"O, go not too nigh," said Catherine; "but fail not to see how the Seytons fight, and how they bear themselves."

"Fear nothing, I will be on my guard," said Ronald Avenel; and without waiting further answer, rode towards the scene of conflict, keeping, as he rode, the higher and uninclosed ground, and ever looking cautiously around him, for fear of involving himself in some hostile party. As he approached, the shots rung sharp and more sharply on his ear, the shouts came wilder and wilder, and he felt that thick beating of the heart, that mixture of natural apprehension, intense curiosity, and anxiety for the dubious event, which even the bravest

experience when they approach alone to a scene of interest and of danger.

At length he drew so close, that from a bank, screened by bushes and underwood, he could distinctly see where the struggle was most keenly maintained. This was in a hollow way, leading to the village, up which the Queen's vanguard had marched with more hasty courage than well advised conduct, for the purpose of possessing themselves of that post of vantage. But they found the hedges and inclosures already occupied by the enemy, led by the celebrated Kirkcaldy of Grange, and the Earl of Morton ; and not small was the loss which they sustained while struggling forward to come to close with the men-at-arms on the other side. But, as the Queen's followers were chiefly noblemen and barons, with their kinsmen and followers, they had pressed onwards, contemning obstacles and danger, and had, when Roland arrived on the ground, met hand to hand at the gorge of the pass with the Regent's vanguard, and endeavoured to

bear them out of the village at the spear-point; while their foes, equally determined to keep the advantage which they had attained, struggled with the like obstinacy to drive back the assailants.

Both parties were on foot, and armed in proof; so that, when the long lances of the front ranks were fixed in each other's shields, corslets, and breast-plates, the struggle resembled that of two bulls, who, fixing their frontlets hard against each other, remain in that posture for hours, until the superior strength or obstinacy of the one compels the other to take to flight, or bears him down to the earth. Thus locked together in the deadly struggle, which swayed slowly to and fro, as one or other party gained the advantage, those who fell were trampled on alike by friends and foes; those whose weapons were broken retired from the front rank, and had their place supplied by others; while the rearward ranks, unable otherwise to take share in the combat, fired their pis-

tols, and hurled their daggers, and the points and truncheons of the broken weapons, like javelins against the enemy.

"God and the Queen!" resounded from the one party; "God and the King!" thundered from the other, while, in the name of their sovereign, fellow-subjects shed each other's blood, and, in the name of their Creator, defaced his image. Amid the tumult was often heard the voices of the captains, shouting their commands; of leaders and chiefs, crying their gathering words; of groans and shrieks from the falling and the dying.

The strife had lasted nearly an hour. The strength of both parties seemed exhausted, but their rage was unabated, and their obstinacy unsubdued, when Roland, who turned eye and ear to all around him, saw a column of infantry, headed by a few horsemen, wheel round the base of the bank where he had stationed himself, and, levelling their long lances, attack the flank of

the Queen's vanguard, closely engaged as they were with the conflict on their front. The very first glance shewed him that the leader who directed this movement was the Knight of Avenel, his ancient master, and the next convinced him that its effect would be decisive. The result of the attack of fresh and unbroken forces upon the flank of those already wearied with a long and obstinate struggle, was, indeed, instantaneous.

The column of the assailants, which had hitherto shewn one dark, dense, and united line of helmets, surmounted with plumage, was at once broken and hurled in confusion down the hill, which they had so long endeavoured to gain. In vain were the leaders heard calling upon their followers to stand to the combat, and seen personally resisting when all resistance was evidently vain. They were slain, or felled to the earth, or hurried backwards by the mingled tide of flight and pursuit. What were Roland's feelings on beholding the rout, and feeling

that all that remained for him was to turn bridle, and endeavour to ensure the safety of the Queen's person! Yet, keen as his grief and shame might be, they were both forgotten, when, almost close beneath the bank which he occupied, he saw Henry Seyton forced away from his own party in the tumult, covered with dust and blood, and defending himself desperately against several of the enemy who had gathered around him, attracted by his gay armour. Roland paused not a moment, but pushing his steed down the bank, leaped him amongst the hostile party, dealt three or four blows amongst them, which struck down two, and made the rest stand aloof, then reaching Seyton his hand, he exhorted him to seize fast on his horse's mane.

"We live or die together this day," said he; "keep but fast hold till we are out of the press, and then my horse is yours."

Seyton heard and exerted his remaining strength, and, by their joint efforts, Roland brought him out of danger, and behind the

spot from whence he had witnessed the disastrous conclusion of the fight. But no sooner were they under shelter of the trees, than Seyton let go his hold, and in spite of Roland's efforts to support him, fell at length on the turf. "Trouble yourself no more with me," he said; "this is my first and my last battle—and I have already seen too much of it to wish to see the close. Hasten to save the Queen—and commend me to Catherine—she will never more be mistaken for me nor I for her—the last sword-stroke has made an eternal distinction."

"Let me aid you to mount my horse," said Roland, eagerly, "and you may yet be saved—I can find my own way on foot—turn but my horse's head westward, and he will carry you fleet and easy as the wind."

"I will never mount steed more," said the youth; "farewell—I love thee better dying, than ever I thought to have done while in life—I would that old man's blood were not on my hand—*Sancte Benedicite*,

ora pro me—Stand not to look on a dying man, but haste to save the Queen."

These words were spoken with the last effort of his voice, and scarce were they uttered ere the speaker was no more. They recalled Roland to the sense of the duty which he had well-nigh forgotten, but they did not reach his ears only.

"The Queen—where is the Queen?" said Halbert Glendinning, who, followed by two or three horsemen, appeared at this instant. Roland made no answer, but turning his horse, and confiding in his speed, gave him at once rein and spur, and rode over height and hollow towards the Castle of Crookstone. More heavily armed, and mounted upon a horse of less speed, Sir Halbert Glendinning followed with couched lance, calling out as he rode, "Sir, with the holly-branch, halt, and shew your right to bear that badge—fly not thus cowardly, nor dishonour the cognizance thou deservest not to wear!—Halt, sir coward, or by Hea-

ven, I will strike thee with my lance on the back, and slay thee like a dastard—I am the Knight of Avenel—I am Halbert Glendinning."

But Roland, who had no purpose of encountering his old master, and who besides knew the Queen's safety depended on his making the best speed he could, answered not a word to the defiances and reproaches which Sir Halbert continued to throw out against him; but making the best use of his spurs, rode yet harder than before, and had gained about a hundred yards upon his pursuer, when coming near to the yew-tree where he had left the Queen, he saw them already getting to horse, and cried out as loud as he could, "Foes! foes!—Ride for it, fair ladies—Brave gentlemen, do your devoir to protect them."

So saying, he wheeled his horse, and avoiding the shock of Sir Halbert Glendinning, charged one of his followers, who was nearly on a line with him, so rudely with

his lance, that he overthrew horse and man. He then drew his sword and attacked the second, while the black man-at-arms, throwing himself in the way of Glendinning, they rushed on each other so fiercely, that both horses were overthrown, and the riders lay rolling on the plain. Neither was able to arise, for the black horseman was pierced through with Glendinning's lance, and the Knight of Avenel, oppressed with the weight of his own horse and sorely bruised besides, seemed in little better plight than he whom he had mortally wounded.

"Yield thee, Sir Knight of Avenel, rescue or no rescue," said Roland, who had put a second antagonist out of condition to combat, and hastened to prevent Glendinning from renewing the conflict.

"I may not chuse but yield," said Sir Halbert, "since I can no longer fight, but it shames me to speak such a word to a coward like thee."

"Call me not coward," said Roland, lifting his visor, and helping his prisoner to

rise, "since but for old kindness at thy hand, and yet more at thy lady's, I had met thee as a brave man should."

"The favourite page of my wife!" said Sir Halbert, astonished; "Ah! wretched boy, I have heard of thy treason at Lochleven."

"Reproach him not, my brother," said the Abbot, "he was but an agent in the hands of Heaven."

"To horse, to horse!" said Catherine Seyton; "mount and be gone, or we are all lost. I see our gallant army flying for many a league—To horse, my Lord Abbot—To horse, Roland—My gracious Liege, to horse; ere this, we should have ridden a mile."

"Look on these features," said Mary, pointing to the dying knight, who had been unhelmed by some compassionate hand; "look there, and tell me if she who ruins all who love her, ought to fly a foot farther to save her wretched life."

The reader must have long anticipated

the discovery, which the Queen's feelings had made before her eyes confirmed it. It was the features of the unhappy George Douglas, on which death was stamping his mark.

"Look—look at him well," said the Queen, "thus has it been with all who loved Mary Stuart!—The royalty of Francis, the wit of Chatelet, the power and gallantry of the gay Gordon, the melody of Rizzio, the portly form and youthful grace of Darnley, the bold address and courtly manners of Bothwell—and now the deep-devoted passion of the noble Douglas—nought could save them—they looked on the wretched Mary, and to have loved her was crime enough to deserve early death! No sooner had the victim formed a kind thought of me, than the poisoned cup, the axe and block, the dagger, the mine, were ready to punish them for casting away affection on such a wretch as I am.—Importune me not—I will fly no farther—*I* can die but once, and I will die here."

While she spoke, her tears fell fast on the face of the dying man, who continued to fix his eyes on her with an eagerness of passion, which death itself could hardly subdue.—"Mourn not for me," he said faintly, "but care for your own safety—I die a Douglas, and I die pitied by Mary Stuart!"

He expired with these words, and without withdrawing his eyes from her face; and the Queen, whose heart was of that soft and gentle mould, which, in domestic life, and with a more suitable partner than Darnley, might have made her happy, remained weeping by the dead man, until recalled to herself by the Abbot, who found it necessary to use a style of unusual remonstrance. "We also, madam," he said, "we, your Grace's devoted followers, have friends and relatives to weep for. I leave a brother in eminent jeopardy—the husband of the Lady Fleming—the father and brothers of the Lady Catherine, are all in yonder bloody field, slain, it is to be feared, or prisoners.

We forget the fate of our own nearest and dearest, to wait on our Queen, and she is too much occupied with her own sorrows to give one thought to ours."

"I deserve not your reproach, father," said the Queen, checking her tears; "but I am docile to it—where must we go?—what must we do?"

"We must fly, and that instantly," said the Abbot; "whither is not so easily answered, but we may dispute it upon the road—Lift her to her saddle, and set forward."

They set off accordingly—Roland lingered a moment, to command the attendants of the Knight of Avenel to the Castle of Crookstone, and to say that he demanded from him no other condition of liberty, than his word, that he and his followers would keep secret the direction in which the Queen fled. As he turned his rein to depart, the honest countenance of Adam Woodcock stared upon him with an expression of surprise, which, at another time, would

have excited his hearty mirth. He had been one of the followers who had experienced the weight of Roland's arm, and they now knew each other, Roland having put up his vizor, and the good yeoman having thrown away his barret cap, with the iron bars in front, that he might the more readily assist his master. Into this barret-cap, as it lay on the ground, Roland forgot not to drop a few gold pieces, (fruits of the Queen's liberality,) and with a signal of kind recollection and enduring friendship, he departed at full gallop to overtake the Queen, the dust raised by her train being already far down the hill.

" It is not fairy-money," said honest Adam, weighing and handling the gold—" And it is Master Roland himself, that is a certain thing—the same open hand, and, by Our Lady!—(shrugging his shoulders)—the same ready fist!—My lady will hear of this gladly, for she mourns for him as if he were her son. And to see how gay he is! But these light lads are as sure to be

uppermost as the froth to be on the top of the quart-pot—Your man of solid parts remains ever a falconer." So saying, he went to aid his comrades, who had now come up in greater numbers, to carry his master into the Castle of Crookstone.

CHAPTER XI.

My native land, good night!

BYRON.

Many a bitter tear was shed during the hasty flight of Queen Mary, over fallen hopes, future prospects, and slaughtered friends. The deaths of the brave Douglas, and of the fiery but gallant young Seyton, seemed to affect the Queen as much as the fall from the throne, on which she had so nearly been again seated. Catherine Seyton devoured in secret her own grief, anxious to support the broken spirits of her mistress; and the Abbot, bending his anxious thoughts upon futurity, endeavoured in vain to form some plan which had a shadow of hope. The spirit of young Roland, for

he also mingled in the hasty debates held by the companions of the Queen's flight, continued unchecked and unbroken.

"Your Majesty," he said, "has lost a battle—Your ancestor, Bruce, lost seven successively, ere he sat triumphant on the Scottish throne, and proclaimed with the voice of a victor, in the field of Bannockburn. the independence of his country. Are not these heaths, which we may traverse at will, better than the locked guarded, and lake-moated Castle of Lochleven?—We are free—in that one word there is comfort for all our losses."

He struck a bold note, but the heart of Mary made no response.

"Better," she said, "I had still been in Lochleven, than seen the slaughter made by my rebels among the subjects who offered themselves to death for my sake. Speak not to me of further efforts—they would only cost the lives of you the friends who recommend them—I would not again un-

dergo what I felt, when I saw from yonder mount the swords of the fell horsemen of Morton raging among the faithful Seytons and Hamiltons, for their loyalty to their Queen—I would not again feel what I felt when Douglas's life-blood stained my mantle for his love to Mary Stuart—not to be empress of all that Britain's seas enclose. Find for me some place where I can hide my unhappy head, which brings destruction on all who love it—it is the last favour that Mary asks of her faithful follower."

In this dejected mood, but still pursuing her flight with unabated rapidity, the unfortunate Mary, after having been joined by Lord Herries and a few followers, at length halted, for the first time, at the Abbey of Dundrennan, nearly sixty miles distant from the field of battle. In this remote corner of Galloway, the Reformation not having yet been strictly enforced against the monks, a few still lingered in their cells unmolested; and the Prior, with tears and

reverence, received the fugitive Queen at the gate of his convent.

"I bring you ruin, my good Father," said the Queen, as she was lifted from her palfrey.

"It is welcome," said the Prior, "if it comes in the train of duty."

Placed on the ground and supported by her ladies, the Queen looked for an instant at her palfrey, which, jaded and drooping its head, seemed as if it mourned the distresses of its mistress.

"Good Roland," said the Queen, whispering, "let Rosabelle be cared for—ask thy heart, and it will tell thee why I make this little request even in this awful hour."

She was conducted to her apartment, and in the hurried consultation of her attendants, the fatal resolution of the retreat to England was finally adopted. In the morning it received her approbation, and a messenger was dispatched to the English warden, to pray him for safe-conduct and hos-

pitality, on the part of the Queen of Scotland. On the next day, the Abbot walked in the garden of the Abbey with Roland, to whom he expressed his disapprobation of the course pursued. "It is madness and ruin," he said; "better commit herself to the savage Highlanders or wild Bordermen, than to the faith of Elizabeth. A woman to a rival woman—a presumptive successor to the keeping of a jealous Queen!—Roland, Herries is true and loyal, but his counsel has ruined his mistress."

"Ay, ruin follows us every where," said an old man, with a spade in his hand, and dressed like a lay-brother, of whose presence, in the vehemence of his exclamation, the Abbot had not been aware—"Gaze not on me with such wonder!—I am he who was the Abbot Boniface at Kennaquhair, who was the gardener Blinkhoolie at Lochleven, hunted round to the place in which I served my noviciate, and now ye are come to rouse me up again?—A weary

life I have had for one to whom peace was ever the dearest blessing!"

"We will soon rid you of our company, good Father," said the Abbot; "and the Queen will, I fear me, trouble your retreat no more."

"Nay, you said as much before," said the querulous old man, "and yet I was put forth from Kinross, and pillaged by troopers on the road.—They took from me the certificate that you wot of—that of the Baron—ay, he was a moss-trooper like themselves—You asked me of it, and I could never find it, but they found it—it shewed the marriage of—of—my memory fails me—now see how men differ!—Father Nicolas would have told you an hundred tales of the Abbot Ingelram, on whose soul God have mercy!—He was, I warrant you, fourscore and six, and I am not more than—let me see."

"Was not Avenel the name you seek, my good Father?" said Roland impatiently, yet moderating his tone for fear of alarming or offending the infirm old man.

"Ay, right—Avenel, Julian Avenel—You are perfect in the name—I kept all the special confessions, judging it held with my vow to do so—I could not find it when my successor, Ambrosius, spoke on't—but the troopers found it, and the Knight struck his breast, till the target clattered like an empty watering-can."

"Saint Mary!" said the Abbot, "in whom could such a paper excite such interest? What was the appearance of the Knight, his arms, his colours?"

"Ye distract me with your questions—I dared hardly look at him—they charged me with bearing letters for the Queen, and searched my mail—This was all along of your doings at Lochleven."

"I trust in God," said the Abbot to Roland, who stood beside him, shivering and trembling with impatience, "the paper has fallen into the hands of my brother—I heard he had been with his followers on the scout betwixt Stirling and Glasgow.—Bore not

the Knight a holly-bough in his helmet?—Canst thou not remember?"

"O, remember—remember," said the old man pettishly; "count as many years as I do, if your plots will let you, and see what, and how much you remember—Why, I scarce remember the pear-mains which I graffed here with my own hands some fifty years since."

At this moment a bugle sounded loudly from the beach.

"It is the death-blast to Queen Mary's royalty," said Ambrosius; "the English warden's answer has been received, favourable doubtless, for when was the door of the trap closed against the prey which it was set for?—Droop not, Roland—this matter shall be sifted to the bottom—but we must not now leave the Queen—follow me—let us do our duty, and trust the issue with God—Farewell, good Father—I will visit thee again soon."

He was about to leave the garden, fol-

lowed by Roland, with half-reluctant steps. The Ex-Abbot resumed his spade.

"I could be sorry for these men," he said, "ay, and for that poor Queen, but what avail earthly sorrows to a man of four-score?—and it is a rare dropping morning for the early colewort."

"He is stricken with age," said Ambrosius, as he dragged Roland down to the sea-beach; "we must let him take his time to collect himself—nothing now can be thought on but the fate of the Queen."

They soon arrived where she stood, surrounded by her little train, and by her side the Sheriff of Cumberland, a gentleman of the house of Lowther, richly dressed and accompanied by soldiers. The aspect of the Queen exhibited a singular mixture of alacrity and reluctance to depart. Her language and gestures spoke hope and consolation to her attendants, and she seemed desirous to persuade even herself that the step she adopted was secure, and that the assurance she had received of kind recep-

tion was altogether satisfactory; but her quivering lip, and unsettled eye, betrayed at once her anguish at departing from Scotland, and her fears of confiding herself to the doubtful faith of England.

"Welcome, my Lord Abbot," said she; "and you, Roland Avenel, we have joyful news for you—our loving sister's officer proffers us, in her name, a safe asylum from the rebels who have driven us from our own—only it grieves me we must here part from you for a short space."

"Part from us, madam!" said the Abbot; "is your welcome in England, then, to commence with the abridgment of your train and dismissal of your counsellors?"

"Take it not thus, good Father," said Mary; "the Warden and the Sheriff, faithful servants of our Royal Sister, deem it necessary to obey her instructions in the present case, even to the letter, and can only admit me with my female attendants. An express will instantly be dispatched from London, assigning me a place of re-

sidence; and I will speedily send to all of you whenever my Court shall be formed."

"Your Court formed in England! and while Elizabeth lives and reigns?" said the Abbot—"that will be when we shall see two suns in one heaven!"

"Do not think so," replied the Queen; "we are well assured of our sister's good faith. Elizabeth loves fame—and not all that she has won by her power and her wisdom will equal that which she will acquire by extending her hospitality to a distressed sister!—not all that she may hereafter do of good, wise, and great, would blot out the reproach of abusing our confidence.—Farewell, my page—now my knight—farewell for a brief season. I will dry the tears of Catherine, or I will weep with her till neither of us can weep longer." She held out her hand to Roland, who, flinging himself on his knees, kissed it with much emotion. He was about to render the same homage to Catherine, when the Queen, as-

suming an air of sprightliness, said, " Her lips, thou foolish boy! and, Catherine, coy it not—these English gentlemen should see, that, even in our cold clime, Beauty knows how to reward Bravery and Fidelity!"

" We are not now to learn the force of Scottish beauty, or the mettle of Scottish valour," said the Sheriff of Cumberland courteously—" I would it were in my power to bid these attendants upon her who is herself the mistress of Scottish beauty, as welcome to England as my poor cares would make them. But our Queen's orders are positive in case of such an emergence, and they must not be disputed by her subject. —May I remind your Majesty that the tide ebbs fast?"

The Sheriff took the Queen's hand, and she had already placed her foot on the gang-way, by which she was to enter the skiff, when the Abbot, starting from a trance of grief and astonishment at the words of the Sheriff, rushed into the water, and seized upon her mantle.

"She foresaw it!—she foresaw it!" he exclaimed—"she foresaw your flight into her realm; and, foreseeing it, gave orders you should be thus received. Blinded, deceived, doomed Princess! your fate is sealed when you quit this strand.—Queen of Scotland, thou shalt not leave thine heritage!" he continued, holding a still firmer grasp upon her mantle; "true men shall turn rebels to thy will, that they may save thee from captivity or death. Fear not the bills and bows whom that gay man has at his beck—we will withstand him by force. O, for the arm of my warlike brother!—Roland Avenel, draw thy sword."

The Queen stood irresolute and frightened; one foot upon the plank, the other on the sand of her native shore, which she was quitting for ever.

"What needs this violence, Sir Priest?" said the Sheriff of Cumberland; "I came hither at your Queen's command, to do her service; and I will depart at her least order, if she rejects such aid as I can offer. No

marvel is it if our Queen's wisdom foresaw that such chance as this might happen amidst the turmoils of your unsettled State; and, while willing to afford fair hospitality to her Royal Sister, deemed it wise to prohibit the entrance of a broken army of her followers into the English frontier."

"You hear," said Queen Mary, gently unloosing her robe from the Abbot's grasp, "that we exercise full liberty of choice in leaving this shore; and, questionless, the choice will remain free to us in going to France, or returning to our own dominions, as we shall determine—Besides, it is too late—Your blessing, Father, and God speed thee!"

"May He have mercy on thee, and speed thee also!" said the Abbot, retreating. "But my soul tells me I look on thee for the last time!"

The sails were hoisted, the oars were plied, the vessel went freshly on her way through the Frith, which divides the shores of Cumberland from those of Galloway;

but not till the vessel diminished to the size of a child's frigate, did the doubtful, and dejected, and dismissed followers of the Queen cease to linger on the sands; and long, long could they discern the kerchief of Mary, as she waved the oft-repeated signal of adieu to her faithful adherents, and to the shores of Scotland.

If good tidings of a private nature could have consoled Roland for parting with his mistress, and for the distresses of his sovereign, he received such comfort some days subsequent to the Queen's leaving Dundrennan. A breathless post—no other than Adam Woodcock—brought dispatches from Sir Halbert Glendinning to the Abbot, whom he found, with Roland, still residing at Dundrennan, and in vain torturing Boniface with fresh interrogations. The pack-

et bore an earnest invitation to his brother to make Avenel Castle for a time his residence. "The clemency of the Regent," said the writer, "has extended pardon both to Roland and to you, upon condition of your remaining a time under my wardship. And I have that to communicate respecting the parentage of Roland, which not only you will willingly listen to, but which will be also found to afford me, as the husband of his nearest relative, some interest in the future course of his life."

The Abbot read this letter, and paused, as if considering what were best for him to do. Meanwhile, Woodcock took Roland aside, and addressed him as follows:—"Now, look, Mr Roland, that you do not let any papist nonsense lure either the priest or you from the right quarry. See you, you ever bore yourself as a bit of a gentleman. Read that, and thank God that threw old Abbot Boniface in our way, as two of the Seyton's men were conveying

toward Dundrennan here.—We searched him for intelligence concerning that fair exploit of your's at Lochleven, that has cost many a man his life, and me a set of sore bones—and we found what is better for your purpose than our's."

The paper which he gave, was, indeed, an attestation by Father Philip, subscribing himself unworthy Sacristan, and brother of the House of Saint Mary's, stating, "that under a vow of secrecy, he had united, in the holy sacrament of marriage, Julian Avenel and Catherine Græme; but that Julian having repented of his union, he, Father Philip, had been sinfully prevailed on by him to conceal and disguise the same, according to a complot devised betwixt him and the said Julian Avenel, whereby the poor damsel was induced to believe that the ceremony had been performed by one not in holy orders, and having no authority to that effect. Which sinful concealment, the undersigned conceived to be the cause

why he was abandoned to the misguiding of a water-fiend, whereby he had been under a spell, besides being sorely afflicted with rheumatic pains ever after. Wherefore he had deposited this testificate and confession, with the day and date of the said marriage, with his lawful superior Boniface, Abbot of Saint Mary's, *sub sigillo confessionis.*"

It appeared by a letter from Julian, folded carefully up with the certificate, that the Abbot Boniface had, in effect, bestirred himself in the affair, and obtained from the Baron a promise to avow his marriage; but the death of both Julian and his injured bride, together with the Abbot's resignation, his ignorance of the fate of their unhappy offspring, and, above all, his listless and inactive disposition, had suffered the matter to become totally forgotten, until it was recalled by some accidental conversation with the Abbot Ambrosius concerning the fortunes of the Avenel family. At the re-

quest of his successor, he searched for it; but, as he would receive no assistance in looking among the few records of spiritual experiences and important confessions, which he had conscientiously treasured, it might have remained for ever hidden amongst them, but for the more active researches of Sir Halbert Glendinning.

"So that you are like to be heir of Avenel at last, Master Roland, after my lord and lady have gone to their place," said Adam; "and as I have but one boon to ask, I trust you will not nick me with nay."

"Not if it be in my power to say yes, my trusty friend."

"Why then, I must needs, if I live to see that day, keep on feeding the eyasses with unwashed flesh," said Woodcock sturdily, yet as if doubting the reception that his request might meet with.

"Thou shalt feed them with what you list for me," said Roland, laughing; "I am not many months older than when I left

the Castle, but I trust I have gathered wit enough to cross no man of skill in his own vocation."

"Then I would not change places with the King's falconer," said Adam Woodcock, "nor with the Queen's neither—but they say she will be mewed up and never need one—I see it grieves you to think of it, and I could grieve for company, but what help for it—fortune will fly her own flight, let a man hollo himself hoarse."

The Abbot and Roland journeyed to Avenel, where the former was tenderly received by his brother, while the lady wept for joy to find that in her favourite orphan she had protected the sole surviving branch of her own family Sir Halbert Glendinning and his household were not a little surprised at the change which a brief acquaintance with the world had produced in their former inmate, and rejoiced to find, in the petted, spoiled, and presuming page, a modest and unassuming young man, too much acquainted with his own expectations

and character, to be hot or petulant in demanding the consideration which was readily and voluntarily yielded to him. The old Major Domo Wingate was the first to sing his praises, to which Mrs Lilias bore a loud echo, always hoping that God would teach him the true gospel.

To the true gospel the heart of Roland had secretly long inclined, and the departure of the good Abbot for France, with the purpose of entering into some house of his order in that kingdom, removed his chief objection to renouncing the Catholic faith. Another might have existed in the duty which he owed to Magdalen Græme, both by birth and from gratitude. But he learned, ere he had been long a resident in Avenel, that his grandmother had died at Cologne, in the performance of a penance too severe for her age, which she had taken upon herself in behalf of the Queen and Church of Scotland, so soon as she heard of the defeat at Langside. The zeal of the

Abbot Ambrosius was more regulated, but he retired into the Scottish convent of ————, and so lived there, that the fraternity were inclined to claim for him the honours of canonization. But he guessed their purpose, and prayed them, on his death-bed, to do no honours to the body of one as sinful as themselves; but to send his body and his heart to be buried in Avenel burial-aisle, in the monastery of Saint Mary's, that the last Abbot of that celebrated house of devotion might sleep among its ruins.

Long before that period arrived, Roland Avenel was wedded to Catherine Seyton, who, after two years residence with her unhappy mistress, was dismissed, upon her being subjected to closer restraint than had been at first exercised. She returned to her father's house, and as Roland was acknowledged for the successor and lawful heir of the ancient house of Avenel, greatly increased as the estate was by the providence of Sir Halbert Glendinning, there

occurred no objections to the match on the part of her family. Her mother was recently dead when she first entered the convent; and her father, in the unsettled times which followed Queen Mary's flight to England, was not averse to an alliance with a youth, who, himself loyal to Queen Mary, still held some influence, through means of Sir Halbert Glendinning, with the party in power.

Roland and Catherine, therefore, were united, spite of their differing faiths; and the White Lady, whose apparition had been infrequent when the House of Avenel seemed verging to extinction, was seen to sport by her haunted well, with a zone of gold around her bosom as broad as the baldric of an Earl.

THE END.

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